WRITINGS OF THOMAS BOSTON

by Thomas Boston

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

134 Chapters

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Chapter 1

01.00 Human Nature in its Fourfold State

Human Nature in its Fourfold State

by Thomas Boston, 1676-1732

I. The State of INNOCENCE

II. The State of NATURE

1. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state

2. The MISERY of man’s natural state

3. The INABILITY of man’s natural state

III. The State of GRACE

1. Regeneration

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Chapter 2

01.01 The State of Innocence

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) I. The State of Innocence

"Lo, this only have I found, that God has made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Ecclesiastes 7:29 There are four things very necessary to be known by all who would see heaven:

1. What man was in the state of innocence, as God made him.

2. What he is in the state of corrupt nature, as he has unmade himself.

3. What he must be in the state of grace, as created in Christ Jesus unto good works, if ever he be made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

4. What he will be in his eternal state, as made by the Judge of all, either perfectly happy, or completely miserable, and that forever.

These are weighty points, which touch the vitals of practical godliness, from which most men, and even many professors, in these dregs of time, are quite estranged. I design, therefore, under the divine conduct, to open up these things, and apply them.

I begin with the first of them, namely, the State of Innocence: that beholding man polished after the similitude of a palace, the ruins may the more affect us; we may the more prize that matchless Person whom the Father has appointed the repairer of the breach; and that we may, with fixed resolves, betake ourselves to that way which leads to the city which has immoveable foundations. In the text we have three things:

1. The state of innocence wherein man was created. "God has made man upright." By "man" here we are to understand our first parents; the archetypal pair, the root of mankind, and the fountain from whence all generations have streamed; as may appear by comparing Genesis 5:1-2, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him: male and female created he them; and blessed them," as the root of mankind, "and called their name Adam." The original word is the same in our text. In this sense, man was made upright (agreeable to the nature of God, whose work is perfect), without any imperfection, corruption, or principle of corruption, in his body or soul. He was made "upright," that is, straight with the will and law of God, without any irregularity in his soul. By the set it got in its creation, it directly pointed towards God, as his chief end; which straight inclination was represented, as in an emblem, by the erect figure of his body, a figure that no other living creature partakes of. What David was in a gospel sense, that was he in a legal sense; one "according to God’s own heart," altogether righteous, pure, and holy. God made him thus: he did not first make him, and then make him righteous; but in the very making of him, he made him righteous. Original righteousness was created with him; so that in the same moment he was a man, he was a righteous man, morally good; with the same breath that God breathed into him a living soul, he breathed into him a righteous soul.

2. Here is man’s fallen state: "But they have sought out many inventions." They fell off from their rest in God, and fell upon seeking inventions of their own, to mend their case; and they quite marred it. Their ruin was from their own proper motion: they would not abide as God had made them; but they sought out inventions, to deform and undo themselves.

3. Observe here the certainty and importance of these things: "Lo, this only have I found," etc. Believe them, they are the result of a narrow search, and a serious inquiry, performed by the wisest of men. In the two preceding verses, Solomon represents himself as in quest of goodness in the world; but the issue of it was, he could find no satisfying end of his search after it; though it was not for lack of pains, for he "counted one by one, to find out the account." "Behold, this have I found, says the preacher," namely, "That," as the same word is read in our text, "yet my soul seeks—but I find not." He could make no satisfying discovery of it, which might end his inquiry. He found the good very rare, one as it were among a thousand. But could that satisfy the grand query, "Where shall wisdom be found?" No it could not—and if the experience of others in this point, run counter to Solomon’s, as it is no reflection on his discernment, it can as little decide the question, which will remain undetermined until the last day. But, amidst all this uncertainty there is one point found out and fixed—"This have I found." You may depend upon it as a most certain truth, and be fully satisfied in it; "Lo this;" fix your eyes upon it, as a matter worthy of most deep and serious regard, namely, that man’s nature is now depraved—but that depravity was not from God, for he "made man upright;" but from themselves, "they have sought out many inventions."

Doctrine. God made man altogether righteous. This is that state of innocence in which God placed man in the world. It is described in the holy Scripture with a running pen, in comparison of the following states; for it was of no continuance—but passed away as a flying shadow, by man’s abusing the freedom of his will. I shall, I. Inquire into the righteousness of this state wherein man was created.

II. Lay before you some of the happy attendants and consequences thereof.

III. Applying the whole.

I. Of Man’s Original Righteousness. As to the righteousness of this state, consider, that as uncreated righteousness, the righteousness of God is the supreme rule; so all created righteousness, whether of men or angels, has respect to a law as its rule, and is a conformity thereto. A creature can no more be morally independent of God in its actions and powers, than it can be naturally independent of him. A creature, as a creature, must acknowledge the Creator’s will as its supreme law; for as it cannot exist without him, so it must not be but for him, and according to his will; yet no law obliges, until it is revealed. And hence it follows, that there was a law, which man, as a rational creature, was subjected to in his creation; and that this law was revealed to him.

"God made man upright," says the text. This supposes a law to which he was conformed in his creation; as when anything is made regular, or according to rule, of necessity the rule itself is presupposed. Whence we may gather, that this law was no other than the eternal, indispensable law of righteousness, observed in all points by the second Adam, opposed by the carnal mind, and some notions of which remain yet among the Pagans, who, "having not the law, are a law unto themselves," Romans 2:14. In a word, this law is the very same which was afterwards summed up

in the ten commandments, and promulgated, on mount Sinai, to the Israelites, called by us the moral law, and man's righteousness consisted in conformity to this law or rule.

More particularly, there is a twofold conformity required of a man—a conformity of the powers of his soul to the law, which you may call habitual righteousness; and a conformity of all his actions to it, which is actual righteousness. Now, God made man habitually righteous; man was to make himself actually righteous—the former was the stock which God put into his hand; the latter was the improvement he should have made of it. The sum of what I have said is, that the righteousness wherein man was created, was the conformity of all the faculties and powers of his soul to the moral law. This is what we call Original Righteousness, which man was originally endued with. We may take it up in these three things:

1. Man's UNDERSTANDING was a lamp of light. He had perfect knowledge of the law, and of his duty accordingly—he was made after God's image, and consequently could not lack knowledge, which is a part thereof, Colossians 3:10, "The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him." And indeed, this was necessary to fit him for universal obedience; seeing no obedience can be according to the law, unless it proceed from a sense of the commandment of God requiring it. It is true, Adam had not the law written upon tables of stone; but it was written upon his mind, the knowledge thereof being created with him. God impressed it upon his soul, and made him a law to himself, as the remains of it among the heathens do testify, Romans 2:14-15. And seeing man was made to be the mouth of the creation, to glorify God in his works, we have ground to believe he had naturally an exquisite knowledge of the works of God. We have a proof of this in Adam's giving names to the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and those such as express their nature. "Whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof," Genesis 2:19. The dominion which God gave him over the creatures, soberly to use and dispose of them according to his will (still in subordination to the will of God), seems to require no less than a knowledge of their natures. And, besides all this, his perfect knowledge of the law proves his knowledge in the management of civil affairs, which, in respect of the law of God, "a good man will guide with discretion," Psalms 112:5.

2. His WILL in all things was agreeable with the will of God, Ephesians 4:24. There was no corruption in his will, no inclination to evil; for that is sin, properly and truly so called—hence the apostle says, Romans 7:7, "I had not known sin—but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet." An inclination to evil is really a fountain of sin, and therefore inconsistent with that rectitude and uprightness which the text expressly says he was endued with at his creation. The will of man, then, was directed and naturally inclined to God and goodness, though mutable. It was disposed, by its original make, to follow the Creator's will, as the shadow does the body; and was not left in an equal balance to good and evil—for at that rate he had not been upright, nor habitually conformed to the law; which in no moment can allow the creature not to be inclined towards God as his chief end, any more than it can allow man to be a God to himself. The law was impressed upon Adam's soul—now this, according to the new covenant, by which the image of God is repaired, consists in two things:

(1.) Putting the law in the mind, denoting the knowledge of it.

(2.) Writing it in the heart, denoting inclinations in the will, answerable to the commands of the law, Hebrews 8:10. So that as the will, when we consider it as renewed by grace, is by that grace

naturally inclined to the same holiness, in all its parts, which the law requires; so was the will of man, when we consider him as God made him at first, endued with natural inclinations to everything commanded by the law. For if the regenerate are partakers of the divine nature, as undoubtedly they are, for so says the Scripture, 2 Peter 1:4; and if this divine nature can import no less than the inclination of the heart to holiness, then surely Adam's will could not lack this inclination; for in him the image of God was perfect. It is true it is said, Romans 2:14-15, "That the Gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts;" but this denotes only their knowledge of that law, such as it is—but the apostle to the Hebrews, in the text cited, takes the word heart in another sense, distinguishing it plainly from the mind. And it must be granted, that, when God promises, in the new covenant, "to write his law in the hearts of his people," it imports quite another thing than what heathens have—for though they have notions of it in their minds—yet their hearts go another way; their will has a bent and bias quite contrary to that law; therefore, the expression suitable to the present purpose must needs import, besides these notions of the mind, inclinations of the will going along therewith; which inclinations, though mixed with corruption in the regenerate, were pure and unmixed in upright Adam. In a word, as Adam knew his Master's pleasure in the matter of duty, so his will inclined to what he knew.

3. His AFFECTIONS were orderly, pure, and holy; which is a necessary part of that uprightness wherein man was created. The apostle has a petition, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God;" that is, "The Lord straighten your hearts," or make them lie straight to the love of God—and our text tells us that man was made straight. "The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness," Ephesians 4:24. Now this holiness, as it is distinguished from righteousness, may import the purity and good order of the affections. Thus the apostle, 1 Timothy 2:8, will have men to "pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting:" because, as troubled water is unfit to receive the image of the sun, so the heart filled with impure and disorderly affections is not fit for divine communications. Man's sensitive appetite was, indeed, naturally carried out towards objects grateful to the senses. For seeing man was made up of body and soul, and God made man to glorify and enjoy him, and for this end to use his good creatures in subordination to himself; it is plain that man was naturally inclined both to spiritual and sensible good; yet to spiritual good, the chief good as his ultimate end. Therefore, his sensitive motions and inclinations were subordinate to his reason and will, which lay straight with the will of God, and were not in the least contrary to the same. Otherwise he would have been made up of contradictions; his soul being naturally inclined to God, as the chief end, in the superior part thereof; and the same soul inclined to the creature, as the chief end, in the inferior part thereof, as they call it—which is impossible, for man, at the same instant, cannot have two chief ends.

Man's affections, then, in his primitive state, were pure from all defilement, free from all disorder and distemper, because in all their motions they were duly subjected to his clear reason, and his holy will. He had also an executive power answerable to his will; a power to do the good which he knew should be done, and which he was inclined to do, even to fulfill the whole law of God. If it had not been so, God would have required of him perfect obedience; for to say that "the Lord gathers where he has not sown," is but the blasphemy of a wicked heart against so good and bountiful a God, Matthew 25:24-26. From what has been said, it may be gathered, that the original righteousness explained was universal and natural—yet mutable.

1. It was UNIVERSAL, both with respect to the subject of it—the whole man; and the object of it—the whole law. Universal, I say, with respect to the subject of it; for this righteousness was diffused through the whole man—it was a blessed leaven, which leavened the whole lump. There was not a wrong pin in the tabernacle of human nature, when God set it up, however shattered it is now. Man was then holy in soul, body, and spirit; while the soul remained untainted, its lodging was kept clean and undefiled; the members of the body were consecrated vessels, and instruments of righteousness. A combat between flesh and spirit, reason and appetite, nay, the least inclination to sin, or lust of the flesh in the inferior part of the soul, was utterly inconsistent with this uprightness in which man was created; and has been invented to veil the corruption of man's nature, and to obscure the grace of God in Jesus Christ; it looks very much like the language of fallen Adam, laying his own sin at his Maker's door, Genesis 3:12, "The woman whom you gave me—she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." But as this righteousness was universal in respect of the subject, because it spread through the whole man; so also it was universal in respect of the object, the holy law. There was nothing in the law but what was agreeable to his reason and will, as God made him, though sin has now set him at odds with it; his soul was shaped out in length and breadth to the commandment, though exceeding broad; so that his original righteousness was not only perfect in its parts—but in degrees.

2. As it was universal, so it was NATURAL to him, and not supernatural in that state. Not that it was essential to man, as man, for then he could not have lost it, without the loss of his very being; but it was natural to him—he was created with it, and it was necessary to the perfection of man, as he came out of the hand of God, necessary to his being placed in a state of integrity. Yet,

3. It was MUTABLE; it was a righteousness that might be lost, as is manifested by the doleful event. His will was not absolutely indifferent to good and evil; God set it towards good only—yet he did not so fix and confirm its inclinations, that it could not alter. No, it was moveable to evil, and that only by man himself, God having given him a sufficient power to stand in this integrity, if he had pleased. Let no man quarrel with God's works in this; for if Adam had been unchangeably righteous, he must have been so either by nature or by free gift—by nature he could not be so, for that is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature; if by free gift, then no wrong was done to him in withholding what he could not crave. Confirmation in a righteous state is a reward of grace, given upon continuing righteous through the state of trial, and would have been given to Adam if he had stood out the time appointed for probation by the Creator; and accordingly is given to the saints upon account of the merits of Christ, who "was obedient even unto death." And herein believers have the advantage of Adam, that they can never totally nor finally fall away from grace.

Thus was man made originally righteous, being created in "God's own image," Genesis 1:27, which consists in the positive qualities of "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness," Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24. "All that God made was very good," according to their several natures, Genesis 1:31. And so was man morally good, being made after the image of him who is "good and upright," Psalms 25:8. Without this, he could not have answered the great end of his creation, which was, to know, love, and serve his God, according to his will; nay, he could not be created otherwise, for he must either be conformed to the law in his powers, principles, and inclinations, or not—if he was, then he was righteous; and, if not, he was a sinner, which is absurd and horrible to imagine.

II. I shall lay before you some of those things which accompanied or flowed from the righteousness of man’s primitive state. Happiness is the result of holiness; and as this was a holy, so it was a happy state.

1. Man was then a very glorious creature. We have reason to suppose, that as Moses’ face shone when he came down from the mount, so man had a very lightsome and pleasant countenance, and beautiful body, while as yet there was no darkness of sin in him at all. But seeing God himself is "glorious in holiness," Exodus 15:11, surely that spiritual loveliness which the Lord put upon man at his creation, made him a very glorious creature. O, how did light shine in his holy life, to the glory of the Creator! while every action was but the darting forth of a ray and beam of that glorious unmixed light which God had set up in his soul, while that lamp of love, lighted from heaven, continued burning in his heart, as in the holy place; and the law of the Lord, put in his inward parts by the finger of God, was kept by him there, as in the most holy place. There was no impurity to be seen without; no squint look in the eyes, after any unclean thing; the tongue spoke nothing but the language of heaven; and, in a word, "the King’s son was all glorious within," and his "clothing of wrought gold."

2. He was the favorite of Heaven. He shone brightly in the image of God; who cannot but love his own image, wherever it appears. While he was alone in the world, he was not alone, for God was with him. His communion and fellowship were with his Creator, and that immediately; for as yet there was nothing to turn away the face of God from the work of his own hands, seeing sin had not as yet entered, which alone could make the breach. By the favor of God he was advanced to be confederate with heaven in the first covenant, called the covenant of works. God reduced the law, which he gave in his creation, into the form of a covenant, whereof perfect obedience was the condition—life was the thing promised, and death the penalty. As for the condition, one great branch of the natural law was, that man should believe whatever God revealed, and should do whatever he commanded; accordingly, God making this covenant with man, extended his duty to the "not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" and the law thus extended, was the rule of man’s covenant obedience. How easy were these terms to him who had the natural law written on his heart; and that inclining him to obey this positive law revealed to him, it seems, by an audible voice, Genesis 2:16-17, the matter whereof was so very easy! And indeed, it was highly reasonable that the rule and matter of his covenant obedience should be thus extended, that which was added being a thing in itself indifferent, where his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, the plainest evidence of true obedience; and it being in an external thing, wherein his obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous.

Now, upon this condition, God promised him life, the continuance of natural life, in the union of soul and body, and of spiritual life, in the favor of his Creator—he promised him also eternal life in heaven, to have been entered into when he should have passed the time of his trial upon earth, and the Lord should see fit to transport him into the upper paradise. This promise of life was included in the threatening of death, mentioned, Genesis 2:17. For while God says, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die;" it is, in effect, "If you do not eat of it, you shall surely live." And this was sacramentally confirmed by another tree in the garden, called therefore, "The Tree of Life," which he was debarred from, when he had sinned; Genesis 3:22-23, "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden."

Yet it is not to be thought that man's life and death did hang only on this matter of the forbidden fruit—but on the whole law; for so says the apostle, Galatians 3:10, "It is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." That of the forbidden fruit was a revealed part of Adam's religion, and so was necessary expressly to be laid before him; but as to the natural law, he naturally knew death to be the wages of disobedience, for the very heathens were not ignorant of this, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," Romans 1:32. Moreover, the promise included in the threatening, secured Adam's life, according to the covenant, as long as he obeyed the natural law, with the addition of that positive command; so that he needed nothing to be expressed to him in the covenant but what concerned the eating of the forbidden fruit. That eternal life in heaven was promised in this covenant, is plain from this, that the threatening was of eternal death in hell, to which, when man had made himself liable, Christ was promised, by his death to purchase eternal life. And Christ himself expounds the promise of the covenant of works, of eternal life, while he proposes the condition of that covenant to a proud young man, who, though he had not Adam's stock—yet would needs enter into life in the way of working, as Adam was to have done under this covenant, Matthew 19:17, "If you will enter into life" (namely, eternal life, by doing, Matthew 19:16), "keep the commandments." The penalty was death, Genesis 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." The death threatened was such as the life promised was, and that most justly; namely, temporal, spiritual, and eternal death. The event is a commentary on this; for that very day he did eat thereof he was a dead man in law—but the execution was stopped because of his posterity, then in his loins, and another covenant was prepared—however, that day his body got its death-wound, and became mortal. Death also seized his soul; he lost his original righteousness, and the favor of God; witness the pangs of conscience which made him hide himself from God. And he became liable to eternal death, which would have actually followed of course, if the Mediator had not been provided, who found him bound with the cords of death, as a malefactor ready to be led to execution. Thus you have a short description of the covenant into which the Lord brought man in the state of innocence. And does it seem a small thing unto you, that earth was thus confederate with heaven? This could have been done to none but him whom the King of Heaven delighted to honor. It was an act of grace, worthy of the gracious God whose favorite he was; for there was grace and free favor in the first covenant, though the exceeding riches of grace, as the apostle calls it, Ephesians 2:7, were reserved for the second. It was certainly an act of grace, favor, and admirable condescension in God, to enter into a covenant, and such a covenant, with his own creature. Man was not at his own—but at God's disposal, nor had he anything to work with but what he had received from God. There was no proportion between the work and the promised reward. Before that covenant, man was bound to perfect obedience, in virtue of his natural dependence on God; and death was naturally the wages of sin, which the justice of God could and would have required, though there had never been any covenant between God and man—but God was free; man could never have required eternal life as the reward of his work, if there had not been such a covenant. God was free to have disposed of his creatures as he saw fit—if he had stood in his integrity to the end of time, and there had been no covenant promising eternal life to him upon his obedience, God might have withdrawn his supporting hand at last and so have made him creep back into nothing, whence almighty power had drawn him forth. And, what wrong could have been in this, for God would have only taken back what he freely gave? But now, the covenant being made, God becomes debtor to his own

faithfulness—if man will work, he may crave the reward on the ground of the covenant. Well might the angels, then, upon his being raised to this dignity, have given him this salutation—"Hail! you who is highly favored, the Lord is with you."

3. God made him lord of the world, prince of the inferior creatures, universal Lord and emperor of the whole earth. His creator gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, over all the earth, yes, and every living thing that moves on the earth; he "put all things under his feet," Psalms 8:6-8. He gave him a power, soberly to use and dispose of the creatures in the earth, sea, and air. Thus man was God's deputy governor in the lower world, and this his dominion was an image of God's sovereignty. This was common to the man and to the woman—but the man had one thing peculiar to him, namely, that he had dominion over the woman also, 1 Corinthians 11:7. Behold how the creatures came unto him, to own their subjection, and to do him homage as their Lord, and quietly stood before him until he put names on them as his own, Genesis 2:19. Man's face struck an awe upon them; the stoutest creatures stood astonished, tamely and quietly owning him as their Lord and ruler. Thus was man "crowned with glory and honor," Psalms 8:5. The Lord dealt most liberally and bountifully with him, "put all things under his feet;" only he kept one thing, one tree in the garden, out of his hands, even the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But you may say, and did he grudge him this? I answer, Nay; but when he had made him thus holy and happy, he graciously gave him this restriction, which was in its own nature a prop and stay to keep him from falling. And this I say upon these three grounds:

(1.) As it was most proper for the honor of God, who had made man Lord of the lower world, to assert his sovereign dominion over all, by some particular visible sign; so it was most proper for man's safety. Man being set down in a beautiful paradise, it was an act of infinite wisdom, and of grace too, to keep him from one single tree, as a visible testimony that he must hold all of his Creator, as his great landlord; that so, while he saw himself Lord of the creatures, he might not forget that he was still God's subject.

(2.) This was a memorial of his mutable state given to him from heaven, to be laid up by him for his greater caution. For man was created with a free will to good, which the tree of life was an evidence of—but his will was also free to evil, and the forbidden tree was to him a memorial thereof. It was, in a manner, a continual watchword to him against evil, a beacon set up before him, to bid him beware of dashing himself to pieces on the rock of sin.

(3.) God made man upright, directed towards God as his chief end. He set him, like Moses, on the top of the hill, holding up his hands to heaven—and as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands, Exodus 17:10-12, so God gave man an erect figure of body, and forbade him the eating of this tree to keep him in that posture of uprightness wherein he was created. God made the beasts looking down towards the earth, to show that their satisfaction might be brought from thence; and accordingly it does afford them what is suited to their appetite—but the erect figure of man's body, which looks upward, showed him that his happiness lay above him, in God; and that he was to expect it from heaven, and not from earth. Now this fair tree, of which he was forbidden to eat, taught him the same lesson; that his happiness lay not in enjoyment of the creatures, for there was a lack even in paradise—so that the forbidden tree was, in effect, the hand of all the creatures, pointing man away from themselves to God for happiness. It was a sign of emptiness hung before the door of the creation, with the inscription, "This is not your rest."

4. As he had a perfect tranquility within his own bosom, so he had a perfect calm without. His heart had nothing to reproach him with; conscience then had nothing to do—but to direct, approve, and feast him—and without, there was nothing to annoy him. The happy pair lived in perfect amity; and though their knowledge was vast, true, and clear—they knew no shame. Though they were naked, there were no blushes in their faces; for sin, the seed of shame, was not yet sown, Genesis 2:25. And their beautiful bodies were not capable of injuries from the air—so they had no need of clothes, which are originally the badges of our shame. They were liable to no diseases nor pains—and, though they were not to live idle—yet toil, weariness, and sweat of the brows, were not known in this state.

5. Man had a life of pure delight, and unalloyed pleasure, in this state. Rivers of pure pleasure ran through it. The earth, with the product thereof, was now in its glory; nothing had yet come in to mar the beauty of the creatures. God placed him, not in a common place of the earth—but in Eden, a place eminent for pleasantness, as the name of it imports; nay, not only in Eden—but in the garden of Eden—the most pleasant spot of that pleasant place; a garden planted by God himself, to be the mansion-house of this his favorite. When God made the other living creatures, he said, Let the water bring forth the moving creature," Genesis 1:29, and, Let the earth bring forth the living creature," Genesis 1:24. But when man was to be made, he said; "Let us make man," Genesis 1:18. So, when the rest of the earth was to be furnished with herbs and trees, God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, and the fruit-tree," etc., verse 11. But of paradise it is said, "God planted it," Genesis 2:8, which cannot but denote a singular excellence in that garden, beyond all other parts of the then beautiful earth.

He was provided with everything necessary and delightful; for there was "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food," verse 9. He knew not those delights which luxury has invented for the gratification of lust—but his delights were such as came out of the hand of God; without passing through sinful hands, which always leave marks of impurity on what they touch. So his delights were pure—his pleasures refined.

Yet may I show you a more excellent way—wisdom had entered into his heart; surely, then, knowledge was pleasant unto his soul. What delight do some find in their discoveries of the works of nature, by those scraps of knowledge they have gathered! but how much more exquisite pleasure had Adam, while his piercing eyes read the book of God’s works, which God laid before him, to the end he might glorify him in the same; and therefore had certainly fitted him for the work! But, above all, his knowledge of God, and that as his God, and the communion which he had with him, could not but afford him the most refined and exquisite pleasure in the innermost recesses of his heart. Great is that delight which the saints find in those views of the glory of God, which their souls are sometimes let into, while they are compassed about with many infirmities—and much may well be allowed to sinless Adam; who no doubt had a peculiar relish of those pleasures.

6. He was immortal. He would never have died—if he had not sinned; it was in case of sin that death was threatened, Genesis 2:17, which shows it to be the consequence of sin, and not of the sinless human nature. The perfect constitution of his body, which came out of God’s hand very good, and the righteousness and holiness of his soul, removed all inward causes of death; nothing being prepared for the grave’s devouring mouth—but the vile body, Php 3:21, and those who have sinned, Job 24:19. And God’s special care of his innocent creature, secured him against outward

violence. The apostle’s testimony is express, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Behold the door by which death came in! Satan wrought with his lies until he got it opened, and so death entered; therefore, is he said to have been "a murderer from the beginning," John 8:44.

Thus have I shown you the holiness and happiness of men in this state. If any should say, What is all this to us, who never tasted of that holy and happy state? they must know, it nearly concerns us, as Adam was the root of all mankind, our common head and representative; who received from God our inheritance and stock, to keep it for himself and his children, and to convey it to them. The Lord put all mankind’s stock, as it were, in one ship; and, as we ourselves would have done, he made our common father the pilot. He put a blessing in the root, to have been, if rightly managed diffused into all the branches. According to our text, making Adam upright, he made man upright; and all mankind had that uprightness in him—for, "if the root be holy, so are the branches." But more of this afterwards. Had Adam stood, none would have quarreled with the representation.

III. The Doctrine of the State of Innocence APPLIED.

Use 1. For INFORMATION. This shows us,

1. That not God—but man himself was the cause of his ruin. God made him upright; his Creator set him up—but he threw himself down. Was the Lord’s directing and inclining him to good, the reason of his woeful choice? or did heaven deal so sparingly with him, that his pressing needs sent him to hell to seek supply? Nay, man was, and is, the cause of his own ruin.

2. God may most justly require of men perfect obedience to his law, and condemn them for their not obeying it perfectly, though now they have no ability to keep it. In so doing, he gathers but where he has sown. He gave man ability to keep the whole law; man has lost it by his own fault; but his sin could never take away that right which God has to exact perfect obedience of his creature, and to punish in case of disobedience.

3. Behold here the infinite obligation we lie under to Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who, with his own precious blood has bought our freedom, and freely makes offer of it again to us, Hosea 13:9, and that with the advantage of everlasting security, and that it can never be altogether lost any more, John 10:28-29. Free grace will fix those, whom free will shook down into the gulf of misery.

Use 2. This conveys a REPROOF to three sorts of persons:

1. To those who hate religion in the power of it, wherever it appears; and can take pleasure in nothing but in the world and in their lusts. Surely such men are far from righteousness—they are haters of God, Romans 1:30, for they are haters of his image. Upright Adam in paradise would have been a great eyesore to all such persons; as he was to the serpent, whose seed they prove themselves to be, by their malignity.

2. It reproves those who put religion to shame, and those who are ashamed of religion, before a graceless world. There is a generation, who make so bold with the God who made them, and can in a moment crush them, that they ridicule piety, and make a mock of seriousness. "Against whom do you sport yourselves? against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?" Isaiah 57:4. Is it not against God himself, whose image, in some measure restored to some of his creatures, makes them fools in your eyes? But, "be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong,"

Isaiah 28:22. Holiness was the glory which God put on man when he made him; but now the sons of men turn that glory into shame, because they themselves glory in their shame. There are others that secretly approve of religion, and in religious company will profess it, who, at other times, to be neighbor-like, are ashamed to own it; so weak are they, that they are blown over with the wind of the wicked's mouth. A broad laughter, an impious jest, a scoffing jeer, out of a profane mouth, is to many an unanswerable argument against piety and seriousness; for, in the cause of religion, they are as silly doves without heart. O, that such would consider that weighty sentence, "Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark 8:38.

3. It reproves the proud self-conceited professor, who admires himself in a garment of rags which he has patched together. There are many who, when once they have gathered some scraps of knowledge of religion, and have attained to some reformation of life, swell big with conceit of themselves; a sad sign that the effects of the fall lie so heavy upon them that they have not as yet come to themselves, Luke 15:17. They have eyes behind, to see their attainments; but no eyes within, no eyes before, to see their wants, which would surely humble them—for true knowledge makes men to see, both what once they were, and what they are at present; and so is humbling, and will not allow them to be content with any measure of grace attained; but inclines them to press forward, "forgetting the things that are behind," Php 3:13. But those men are such a spectacle of commiseration, as one would be who had set his palace on fire, and was glorying in a cottage which he had built for himself out of the rubbish, though so very weak, that it could not stand against a storm.

Use 3. Of LAMENTATION. Here was a stately building; man carved like a fair palace—but now lying in ashes—let us stand and look on the ruins, and drop a tear. This is a lamentation, and shall be for lamentation. Could we avoid weeping, if we saw our country ruined, and turned by the enemy into a wilderness? if we saw our houses on fire, and our property perishing in the flames? But all this comes far short of the dismal sight; man fallen as a star from heaven! Ah, may we not now say, "O that we were as in months past!" when there was no stain in our nature, no cloud on our minds, no pollution in our hearts! Had we never been in better case, the matter had been less; but those who were brought up in scarlet—do now embrace dunghills! Where is our primitive glory now? Once no darkness in the mind, no rebellion in the will, no disorder in the affections. But ah! "How is the faithful city become an harlot! Righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Our silver is become dross, our wine mixed with water." That heart which was once the temple of God, is now turned into a den of thieves. Let our name be Ichabod, for the glory is departed!

Happy were you, O man! who was like unto you? No pain nor sickness could affect you, no death could approach you, no sigh was heard from you—until these bitter fruits were plucked from the forbidden tree! Heaven shone upon you, and earth smiled—you were the companion of angels, and the envy of devils. But how low is he now laid, who was created for dominion, and made lord of the world! "The crown is fallen from our head—woe unto us that we have sinned." The creatures that waited to do him service, are now, since the fall, set in battle-array against him, and the least of them, having commission, proves too hard for him. Waters overflow the old world; fire consumes Sodom; the stars in their courses fight against Sisera; frogs, flies, lice, etc., become executioners to Pharaoh and his Egyptians; worms eat up Herod—yes, man needs a league with

the beasts; yes, with the very stones of the field, Job 5:23, having reason to fear, that everyone who finds him will slay him. Alas! how are we fallen! how are we plunged into a gulf of misery! The sun has gone down on us, death has come in at our windows; our enemies have put out our two eyes, and sport themselves with our miseries.

Let us, then, lie down in the dust, let shame and confusion cover us. Nevertheless, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Come then, O sinner, look to Jesus Christ, the second Adam—leave the first Adam and his covenant; come over to the Mediator and Surety of the new and better covenant; and let your hearts say, "Be you our ruler, and let this breach be under your hand." Let your "eye trickle down, and cease not, without any intermission, until the Lord looks down, and beholds from heaven," Lamentations 3:49-50.

01.02. The State of NATURE

02. The State of NATURE

a. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state

b. The MISERY of man’s natural state

c. The INABILITY of man’s natural state

01.02a The SINFULNESS of man's natural state

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) II. The State of NATURE Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) I. The State of INNOCENCE II. The State of NATURE 1. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state

Genesis 6:5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

We have seen what man was, as God made him; a lovely and happy creature—let us view him now as he has unmade himself; and we shall see him a sinful and a miserable creature. This is the sad state we are brought into by the fall; a state as black and doleful, as the former was glorious; and this we commonly call, "The State of Nature;" or "Man’s Natural State;" according to that of the apostle, Ephesians 2:3, "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." And herein two things are to be considered—1. The sinfulness; 2. The misery of this state, in which all the unregenerate live. I begin with the sinfulness of man’s natural state, whereof the text gives us a full, though short account. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great," &e. The scope and design of these words are, to clear God’s justice in bringing the flood on the old world. There are two particular causes taken notice of in the preceding verses:

1. Mixed marriages, Genesis 6:2, "The sons of God," the posterity of Seth and Enoch, professors of the true religion, married with "the daughters of men," the profane, cursed race of Cain. They did not carry the matter before the Lord, that he might choose for them, Psalms 48:14—but without any respect to the will of God, they chose, not according to the rules of their faith—but of their fancy; they "saw that they were fair;" and their marriage with them occasioned their divorce from God. This was one of the causes of the deluge, which swept away the old world. Would to God that all professors in our day could plead not guilty—but though that sin brought on the deluge—yet the deluge has not swept away that sin; which as of old, so in our day, may justly be looked upon as one of the causes of the decay of religion. It was an ordinary thing among the Pagans, to change their gods, as they changed their condition into a married lot—many sad instances the Christian world affords of the same; as if people were of Pharaoh’s opinion, That religion is only for those who have no other care upon their heads, Exodus 5:17.

2. Great oppression, Genesis 6:4, "There were giants in the earth in those days;" men of great stature, great strength, and monstrous wickedness, "filling the earth with violence," Genesis 6:11. But neither their strength, nor treasures of wickedness, could profit them in the day of wrath. Yet the gain of oppression still causes many to forget the terror of this dreadful example.

Thus much for the connection, and what particular crimes that generation was guilty of. But every person that was swept away by the flood could not be guilty of these things; and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Therefore, in my text, there is a general indictment drawn up against them all, "The wickedness of man was great in the earth," etc., and clearly proved, for God saw it. Two things are here laid to their charge:

1. Corruption of life, wickedness, great wickedness. I understand this of the wickedness of their lives; for it is plainly distinguished from the wickedness of their hearts. The sins of their outward lives were great in the nature of them, and greatly aggravated by their attendant circumstances—and this not only among those of the race of cursed Cain—but those of holy Seth; the wickedness of man was great. And then it is added, "in the earth:" (1.) To vindicate God's severity, in that he not only cut off sinners—but defaced the beauty of the earth, and swept off the brute creatures from it, by the deluge; that as men had set the marks of their impiety, God might set the marks of his indignation, on the earth. (2.) To show the heinousness of their sin, in making the earth, which God had so adorned for the use of man--a sink of sin, and a stage whereon to act their wickedness, in defiance of Heaven. God saw this corruption of life—he not only knew it, and took notice of it—but he made them to know that he took notice of it, and that he had not forsaken the earth, though they had forsaken heaven.

2. Corruption of nature—Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. All their wicked practices are here traced to the fountain and spring-head—a corrupt heart was the source of all. The soul, which was made upright in all its faculties, is now wholly disordered. The heart, that was made according to God's own heart, is now the reverse of it, a forge of evil imaginations, a sink of inordinate affections, and a storehouse of all impiety, Mark 7:21-22. Behold the heart of the natural man, as it is opened in our text. The mind is defiled; the thoughts of the heart are evil; the will and affections are defiled—the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, that is, whatever the heart frames within itself by thinking, such as judgment, choice, purposes, devices, desires, every inward motion, or rather the frame of the thoughts of the heart, namely, the frame, make, or mold of these, 1 Chronicles 29:18, is evil.

Yes, and every imagination, every frame of his thoughts, is evil. The heart is ever framing something; but never one right thing—the frame of thoughts, in the heart of man, is exceedingly various; yet are they never cast into a right frame. But is there not, at least, a mixture of good in them? No, they are only evil; there is nothing in them truly good and acceptable to God—nor can anything be so, which comes out of that forge; where, not the Spirit of God—but "the prince of the power of the air, works," Ephesians 2:2. Whatever changes may be found in them, are only from evil to evil; for the imagination of the heart, or frame of thoughts in natural men, is evil continually, or every day. From the first day to the last day, in this state, they are in midnight darkness; there is not the glimmering of the light of holiness in them; not one holy thought can ever be produced by the unholy heart.

O, what a vile heart is this! O, what a corrupt nature is this! The tree that always brings forth fruit—but never good fruit, whatever soil it be set in, whatever pains be taken with it, must naturally be an evil tree—and what can that heart be, whereof every imagination, every set of thoughts, is only evil, and that continually? Surely that corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk deep into our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace. Now such is man's heart, such is his nature, until regenerating grace changes it. God, who searches the heart, saw man's heart was so, he took special notice of it—and the faithful and true Witness cannot mistake our case; though we are most apt to mistake ourselves in this point, and generally overlook it.

Beware that there be not a thought in your wicked heart saying, "What is that to us? Let that generation, of whom the text speaks, see to that." For the Lord has left the case of that generation on record, to be a looking-glass to all after generations, wherein they may see their own corruption of heart, and what their lives would be too, if he restrained them not—for "as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man," Proverbs 27:19. Adam's fall has framed all men's hearts alike in this matter. Hence the apostle, Romans 3:10-18, proves the corruption of the nature, hearts, and lives of all men, from what the psalmist says of the wicked in his day, Psalms 14:1-3; Psalms 5:9; Psalms 140:3; Psalms 10:7; Psalms 36:1; and from what Jeremiah says of the wicked in his day, Jeremiah 9:3, and from what Isaiah says of those that lived in his time, Isaiah 57:7-8, and concludes, verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God." Had the history of the deluge been transmitted unto us, without the reason thereof in the text, we might thence have gathered the corruption and total depravity of man's nature—for what other quarrel could the holy and just God have with the infants that were destroyed by the flood, seeing they had no actual sin? If we saw a wise man, who, having made a beautiful piece of work, and heartily approved of it when he gave it out of his hand, as fit for the use it was designed for, rise up in wrath and break it all in pieces, when he looked on it afterwards; should we not thence conclude that the frame of it had been quite marred since it came out of his hand, and that it does not serve for the use it was at first designed for? How much more, when we see the holy and wise God destroying the work of his own hands, once solemnly pronounced by him very good, may we not conclude that the original frame thereof is utterly marred, that it cannot be mended—but must needs be new made, or lost altogether? Genesis 6:6-7, "And it repeated the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man," or blot him out; as a man does a sentence out of a book, that cannot be corrected by cutting off some letters, syllables, or words, and interlining others here and there—but must needs be wholly new framed. But did the deluge carry off this corruption of man's nature? did it mend the matter? No, it did not. God, in his holy Providence, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the" new "world may become guilty before God," as well as the old, permits that corruption of nature to break out in Noah, the father of the new world, after the deluge was over. Behold him, as another Adam, sinning in the fruit of a tree, Genesis 9:20-21, "He planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent." More than that, God gives the same reason against a new deluge, which he gives in our text for bringing that on the old world—"I will not," says he, "again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," Genesis 8:21. Whereby it is intimated that there is no mending of the matter by this means; and that if he should always take the same course with men that he had done, he would be always sending deluges on the earth, seeing the corruption of man's nature still remains. But though the flood could not carry off the corruption of nature—yet it pointed at the way how it is to be done; namely, that men must be "born of water and of the Spirit," raised from spiritual death in sin by the grace of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood; out of which a new world of saints arise in regeneration, even as the new world of sinners out of the waters, where they had long lain buried, as it were, in the ark. This we learn from 1 Peter 3:20-21, where the apostle, speaking of Noah's ark, says, "Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us." Now the waters of the deluge being a like figure to baptism, it plainly follows, that they signified as baptism does "the washing of

regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." To conclude then, those waters, though now dried up, may serve us still for a looking-glass, in which we may see the total corruption of our nature, and the necessity of regeneration. From the text, thus explained, this weighty point of doctrine arises, which he who runs may read in it, namely, Man's nature is now wholly corrupted. There is a sad alteration, an astonishing overturning in the nature of man—where, at first, there was nothing evil, now there is nothing good. In treating on this doctrine, I shall,

I. Confirm it.

II. Represent this corruption of nature in its several parts.

III. Show you how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted.

IV. Apply this doctrine.

I. I shall CONFIRM the doctrine of the corruption of nature. I shall hold the glass to your eyes, wherein you may see your sinful nature; which, though God takes particular notice of it, many quite overlook. Here we shall consult the word of God, and men's experience and observation. For scripture-proof, let us consider,

1. How the scripture takes particular notice of fallen Adam's communicating his image to his posterity, Genesis 5:3, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Compare with this the first verse of that chapter, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Behold here, how the image after which man was made, and the image after which he is begotten, are opposed. Man was created in the likeness of God; that is, the holy and righteous God made a holy and righteous creature—but fallen Adam begat a son, not in the likeness of God—but in his own likeness; that is, corrupt sinful Adam begat a corrupt sinful son. For as the image of God bore righteousness and immortality in it, as was shown before; so this image of fallen Adam bore corruption and death in it, 1 Corinthians 15:49-50, compare 1 Corinthians 15:22. Moses, in Genesis 5:1-32, giving us the first bill of mortality that ever was in the world, ushers it in with this, that dying Adam begat mortals. Having sinned, he became mortal, according to the threatening; and so he begat a son in his own likeness--sinful, and therefore mortal. Thus sin and death passed on all. Doubtless he begat both Cain and Abel in his own likeness, as well as Seth. But it is not recorded of Abel; because he left no children behind him, and his becoming the first sacrifice to death in the world, was a sufficient document of it—nor of Cain, to whom it might have been thought peculiar, because of his monstrous wickedness; and besides, his posterity was drowned in the flood—but it is recorded of Seth, because be was the father of the holy seed; and from him all mankind since the flood have descended, and fallen Adam's own likeness with them.

2. It appears from that text of Scripture, Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Our first parents were unclean, how then can we be clean? How could our immediate parents be clean? how can our children be so? The uncleanness here referred to, is a sinful uncleanness; for it is such as makes man's days full of trouble—and it is natural, being derived from unclean parents—"Man is born of a woman," Job 14:1, "And how can he be clean, that is born of a woman?" Job 25:4. The omnipotent God, whose power is not here challenged, could bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and so did in the case of the man Christ—but no other being can. Every person who is born according to the course of nature is born unclean. If the root is

corrupt, so must the branches be. Neither is the matter mended, though the parents be sanctified ones; for they are but holy in part, and that by grace, not by nature! and they beget their children as sinful men, not as holy men. Therefore as the circumcised parent begets an uncircumcised child, and after the purest grain is sown, we reap chaff with the corn; so the holiest parent begets unholy children, and cannot communicate their grace to them, as they do their nature; which many godly parents find true, in their sad experience.

3. Consider the confession of the psalmist David, Psalms 51:5, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Here he ascends from his actual sin, to the fountain of it, namely, corrupt nature. He was a man according to God's own heart; but from the beginning it was not so with him. He was begotten in lawful marriage—but when the lump was shaken in the womb, it was a sinful lump. Hence the corruption of nature in called the "old man;" being as old as ourselves, older than grace, even in those that are sanctified from the womb.

4. Hear our Lord's determination of the point, John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Behold the universal corruption of mankind—all are flesh! Not that all are frail, though that is a sad truth too; yes, and our natural frailty is an evidence of our natural corruption; but that is not the sense of the text—the meaning of it is, all are corrupt and sinful, and that naturally. Hence our Lord argues, that because they are flesh, therefore they must be born again, or else they cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John 3:3-5. And as the corruption of our nature shows the absolute necessity of regeneration, so the absolute necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature; for why should a man need a second birth, if his nature were not quite marred in his first birth?

5. Man certainly is sunk very low now, in comparison of what he once was. God made him but a "little lower than the angels:" but now we find him likened to the beasts that perish. He hearkened to a brute--and is now become like one of them. Like Nebuchadnezzar, his portion in his natural state is with the beasts, "minding only earthly things," Php 3:19. Nay, brutes, in some sort, have the advantage of the natural man, who is sunk a degree below them. He is more negligent of what concerns him most, than the stork, or the turtle-dove, or the crane, or the swallow, in what is for their interest, Jeremiah 8:7. He is more stupid than the ox or donkey, Isaiah 1:3. I find him sent to school to learn of the ant, which has no guide or leader to go before her; no overseer or officer to compel or stir her up to work; no ruler—but may do as she wills, being under the dominion of none; yet "provides her food in the summer and harvest," Proverbs 6:6-8; while the natural man has all these, and yet exposes himself to eternal starving. Nay, more than all this, the Scriptures hold out the natural man, not only as lacking the good qualities of these creatures—but as a compound of the evil qualities of the worst of the creatures; in whom the fierceness of the lion, the craft of the fox, the unteachableness of the wild donkey, the filthiness of the dog and swine, the poison of the asp, and such like, meet. Truth itself calls them "serpents, a generation of vipers;" yes, more, even "children of the devil," Matthew 23:33; John 8:44. Surely, then, man's nature is miserably corrupted.

6. "We are by nature the children of wrath," Ephesians 2:3. We are worthy of, and liable to, the wrath of God; and this by nature—therefore, doubtless, we are by nature sinful creatures. We are condemned before we have done good or evil; under the curse, before we know what it is. But, "will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?" Amos 3:4; that is, will the holy and just God

roar in his wrath against man, if he be not, by his sin, made a prey for his wrath? No, he will not; he cannot. Let us conclude then, that, according to the word of God, man’s nature is a corrupt nature.

If we consult experience, and observe the case of the world, in those things that are obvious to any person who will not shut his eyes against clear light, we shall quickly perceive such fruits as discover this root of bitterness. I shall propose a few things that may serve to convince us in this point:

1. Who sees not a flood of miseries overflowing the world? Where can a man go where he shall not dip his foot, if he go not over head and ears, in it? Everyone at home and abroad, in city and country, in palaces and cottages, is groaning under some one thing or other, ungrateful to him. Some are oppressed with poverty, some chastened with sickness and pain, some are lamenting their losses, everyone has a cross of one sort or another. No man’s condition is so soft—but there is some thorn of uneasiness in it. At length death, the wages of sin, comes after these its harbingers, and sweeps all away. Now, what but sin has opened the sluice of sorrow? There is not a complaint nor sigh heard in the world, nor a tear that falls from our eye—but it is an evidence that man is fallen as a star from heaven; for God distributes sorrows in his anger, Job 21:17. This is a plain proof of the corruption of nature—forasmuch as those who have not yet actually sinned, have their share of these sorrows; yes, and draw their first breath in the world weeping, as if they knew this world at first sight to be a Bochim, the place of weepers. There are graves of the smallest, as well as of the largest size, in the churchyard; and there are never lacking some in the world, who are, like Rachel, weeping for their children because they are not, Matthew 2:18.

2. Observe how early this corruption of nature begins to appear in young ones. Solomon observes, that "even a child is known by his doings," Proverbs 20:11. It may soon be discerned what way the bias of the heart lies. Do not the children of fallen Adam, before they can go alone, follow their father’s footsteps? What a vast deal of little pride, ambition, sinful curiosity, vanity, willfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them? And, when they creep out of infancy, there is a necessity of using the rod of correction, to drive away the foolishness which is bound in their hearts, Proverbs 20:15, which shows, that, if grace prevails not, the child will be as Ishmael, "a wild ass-man," as the word is, Genesis 16:12.

3. Take a view of the manifold gross out-breakings of sin in the world—the wickedness of man is yet great in the earth. Behold your bitter fruits of the corruption of our nature, Hosea 4:2, "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, like the breaking forth of waters, and blood touches blood." The world is filled with filthiness, and all manner of lewdness, wickedness, and profanity. From whence comes the deluge of sin on the earth—but from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, the heart of man, "out of which proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness," etc., Mark 7:21-22. You will, it may be, thank God with a whole heart, that you are not like other men; and indeed, you have more reason for it than, I fear, you are aware of; for, as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man, Proverbs 28:19. As, looking into clear water, you see your own face; so, looking into your heart, you may see other men’s there; and, looking into other men’s in them you may see your own. So that the most vile and profane wretches who are in the world, should serve you for a looking-glass; in which you ought to discern the corruption of your own nature—and if you were to do so, you would, with a heart truly touched, thank God, and not yourselves, indeed,

that you are not as other men in your lives; seeing the corruption of nature is the same in you as in them.

4. Cast your eye upon those terrible convulsions which the world is thrown into by the lusts of men! Lions make not a prey of lions, nor wolves of wolves—but men are turned lions and wolves to one another, biting and devouring one another. Upon how slight occasions will men sheath their swords in one another! The world is a wilderness, where the clearest fire that men can carry about with them will not frighten away the wild beasts that inhabit it, and that because they are men, and not brutes; but one way or other they will be wounded. Since Cain shed the blood of Abel, the earth has been turned into a slaughter-house; and the chase has been continued, since Nimrod began his hunting; on the earth, as in the sea, the greater still devouring the lesser. When we see the world in such a ferment, everyone attacking another with words or swords, we may conclude there is an evil spirit among them. These violent heats among Adam's sons, show the whole body to be distempered, the whole head to be sick, and the whole heart to be faint. They surely proceed from an inward cause, James 4:1, "lusts that war in our members."

5. Consider the necessity of human laws, guarded by terrors and punishments; to which we may apply what the apostle says, 1 Timothy 1:9, that "the law is not made for a righteous man—but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," etc. Man was made for society; and God himself said of the first man, when he had created him, that it was "not fit he should be alone;" yet the case is such now, that, in society, he must be hedged in with thorns. And that from hence we may the better see the corruption of man's nature, let us consider,

(1.) Every man naturally loves to be at full liberty himself; to have his own will for his law; and, if he were to follow his natural inclinations, he would vote himself out of the reach of all laws, divine and human. Hence some, the power of whose hands has been answerable to their natural inclination, have indeed made themselves absolute, and above laws; agreeably to man's monstrous design at first, to be as gods, Genesis 3:5. Yet,

(2.) There is no man that would willingly adventure to live in a lawless society—therefore, even pirates and robbers have laws among themselves, though the whole society casts off all respect to law and right. Thus men discover themselves to be conscious of the corruption of nature; not daring to trust one another—but upon security.

(3.) However dangerous it is to break through the hedge—yet the violence of lust makes many daily adventure to run the risk. They will not only sacrifice their credit and conscience, which last is lightly esteemed in the world; but for the pleasure of a few moments, immediately followed with terror from within, they will lay themselves open to a violent death by the laws of the land wherein they live.

(4.) The laws are often made to yield to men's lusts. Sometimes whole societies run into such extravagances, that, like a company of prisoners, they break off their fetters, and put their guard to flight; and the voice of laws cannot be heard for the noise of arms. And seldom is there a time, wherein there are not some people so great and daring, that the laws dare not look their impetuous lusts in the face; which made David say, in the case of Joab, who had murdered Abner, "These men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me," 2 Samuel 3:39. Lusts sometimes grow too strong for laws, so that the law becomes slack, as the pulse of a dying man, Habakkuk 1:3-4.

(5.) Consider, what necessity often appears of amending old laws, and making new ones; which have their rise from new crimes, of which man's nature is very fruitful. There would be no need of mending the hedge, if men were not, like unruly beasts, still breaking it down. It is astonishing to see what a figure the Israelites, who were separated unto God from among all the nations of the earth, make in their history; what horrible confusions were among them, when there was no king in Israel, as you may see from the eighteenth to the twenty-first chapter of Judges—how hard it was to reform them, when they had the best of magistrates! and how quickly they turned aside again, when they got wicked rulers! I cannot but think, that one grand design of that sacred history, was to discover the corruption of man's nature, the absolute need of the Messiah, and his grace; and that we ought, in reading it, to improve it to that end. How cutting is that word which the Lord has to Samuel, concerning Saul, 1 Samuel 9:17, "The same shall reign over" – or, as the word is, shall restrain – "my people." O, the corruption of man's nature! the awe and dread of the God of heaven restrains them not; but they must have gods on earth to do it, "to put them to shame," Judges 18:7.

6. Consider the remains of that natural corruption in the saints. Though grace has entered—yet corruption is not expelled—though they have got the new creature—yet much of the old corrupt nature remains; and these struggle together within them, as the twins in Rebekah's womb, Galatians 5:17. They find it present with them at all times, and in all places, even in the most retired corners. If a man has a troublesome neighbor, he may move; if he has an ill servant, he may put him away at the term; if a bad companion, he may sometimes leave the house, and be free from molestation that way. But should the saint go into a wilderness, or set up his tent on some remote rock in the sea, where never foot of man, beast, or fowl had touched, there his corrupt heart will be with him. Should he be with Paul, caught up to the third heavens, it will come back with him, 2 Corinthians 12:7. It follows him as the shadow does the body; it makes a blot in the fairest line he can draw. It is like the fig-tree on the wall, which however nearly it was cut—yet still grew, until the wall was thrown down—for the roots of it are fixed in the heart, while the saint is in the world, as with bands of iron and brass. It is especially active when he would do good, Romans 7:21, then the fowls come down upon the carcasses. Hence often, in holy duties, the spirit of a saint, as it were, evaporates; and he is left before he is aware, like Michal, with an image in the bed instead of a husband. I need not stand to prove to the godly the corruption of nature in them, for they groan under it; and to prove it to them, were to hold out a candle to let them see the sun—as for the wicked, they are ready to account mole-hills in the saints as big as mountains, if not reckon them all hypocrites. But consider these few things on this head:

(1.) "If it be thus in the green tree how must it be in the dry?" The saints are not born saints—but made so by the power of regenerating grace. Have they got a new nature, and yet the old remains with them? How great must that corruption be in others, in whom there is no grace!

(2.) The saints groan under it, as a heavy burden. Hear the apostle, Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What though the carnal man lives at ease and quiet, and the corruption of nature is not his burden, is he therefore free from it? No, no! It is because he is dead, that he feels not the sinking weight. Many a groan is heard from a sick bed—but never any from a grave. In the saint, as in the sick man, there is a mighty struggle; life and death striving for the mastery—but in the natural man, as in the dead corpse, there is no noise; because death bears full sway.

(3.) The godly man resists the old corrupt nature; he strives to mortify it—yet it remains; he endeavors to starve it, and by that means to weaken it—yet it is active. How must it spread then, and strengthen itself in that soul, where it is not starved—but fed! And this is the case of all the unregenerate, who make "provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." If the garden of the diligent affords him new work daily, in cutting off and rooting up, surely that of the sluggard must needs be "all grown over with thorns."

7. I shall add but one observation more; and that is, that in every man, naturally, the image of fallen Adam appears. Some children, by the features and lineaments of their face, do, as it were, father themselves—and thus we resemble our first parents. Everyone of us bears the image and impression of the fall upon him; and to evince the truth of this, I appeal to the consciences of all, in these following particulars:

(1.) Is not sinful curiosity natural to us? and is not this a print of Adam's image? Genesis 3:6. Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things, than to practice old known truths? How much like old Adam do we look in this eagerness for novelties, and disrelish of old solid doctrines? We seek after knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened and spurred on.

(2.) If the Lord, by his holy law and wise providence, puts a restraint upon us, to keep us back from anything, does not that restraint whet the edge of our natural inclinations, and makes us so much the keener in our desires? And in this do we not betray it plainly, that we are Adam's children? Genesis 3:2-6. I think this cannot be denied; for daily observation evinces, that it is a natural principle, that "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant," Proverbs 9:17. The very heathens were convinced, that man was possessed with this spirit of contradiction, though they knew not the spring of it. How often do men let themselves loose in those things, in which, had God left them at liberty, they would have bound up themselves! but corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge. And is it not a repeating of our fathers' folly, that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit, than gather what is shaken off the tree of good providence to them, when they have God's express allowance for it?

(3.) Which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to hear the instruction that causes to err? And was not this the rock our first parents split upon? Genesis 3:4-6. How apt is weak man, ever since that time, to parley with temptations! "God speaks once, yes twice—yet man perceives it not," Job 33:14—but he readily listens to Satan. Men might often come fair off, if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence, when first they appear; if they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away—but, alas! though we see the train coming at us—yet we stand until it arrives, and we are blown up with its force.

(4.) Do not the eyes in your head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents? Genesis 3:6. Man is never more blind than when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasing to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were opened to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls; at which impure imaginations and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case, Joshua 7:21. Holy Job was aware of this danger, from these two little rolling bodies, which a very small splinter of

wood can make useless, "I made a covenant with mine eyes," Job 31:1.

(5.) Is it not natural to us to care for the body, even at the expense of the soul? This was one ingredient in the sin of our first parents, Genesis 3:6. O, how happy might we be, if we were but at half the pains about our souls, that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30, ran but near as often through our minds as these questions do, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?" Matthew 6:31, then many a hopeless case would become very hopeful. But the truth is, most men live as if they were nothing but a lump of flesh—or as if their soul served for no other use—but, like salt, to keep their body from corrupting. "They are flesh," John 3:6; "they mind the things of the flesh," Romans 8:5; and "they live after the flesh," Romans 8:13. If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for—yes, the body is often served, when the conscience has entered a protest against it.

(6.) Is not everyone by nature discontented with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it? This also was Adam's case, Genesis 3:5-6. Some one thing is always lacking; so that man is a creature given to changes. If any doubt this, let them look over all their enjoyment; and, after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for lack of something—though perhaps, if they considered the matter aright, they would see that it is better for them to lack, than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes, on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease which Solomon calls, "The wandering of the desire," or, as the word is, "The walking of your soul," Ecclesiastes 6:9. This is a sort of diabolical trance, wherein the soul traverses the world; feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings; snatches at this and the other created excellency, in imagination and desire; goes here, and there, and everywhere, except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, until conquering grace brings it back to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ—but until this be, if man were set again in paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yes, and leaping over the hedge a second time.

(7.) Are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil councils and examples, than by those that are good! You will see this was the ruin of Adam, Genesis 3:6. Evil example, to this day, is one of Satan's master-devices to ruin men. Though we have, by nature, more of the fox than of the lamb; yet that ill property which some observe in this creature, namely, that if one lamb skips into a water, the rest will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of men; to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others in it before them. Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream, to carry us over plain duty; but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to—our affection, in that case, blinds our judgment; and what we should abhor in others, is complied with, to humor them. Nothing is more plain, than that generally men choose rather to do what the most do, than what the best do.

(8.) Who of all Adam's sons needs be taught the art of sewing fig-leaves together, to cover their nakedness? Genesis 3:7. When we have ruined ourselves, and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves, by ourselves—many poor contrivances are employed, as silly and insignificant as Adam's fig-leaves. What pains are men at, to cover their sin from their own conscience, and to draw all the fair colors upon it that they can! And when once convictions

are fastened upon them, so that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to cover it by self-deceit, as for fish to swim in water, or birds to fly in the air. Therefore, the first question of the convinced is, "What shall we do?" Acts 2:37. How shall we qualify ourselves? What shall we perform? Not considering that the new creature is God's own workmanship or deed, Ephesians 2:10, any more than Adam considered and thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices, Genesis 3:21.

(9.) Do not Adam's children naturally follow his footsteps--in hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord? Genesis 3:8. We are quite as blind in this matter as he was, who thought to hide himself from the presence of God among the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin, than in one that is openly committed. "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me," Job 24:15. Men will freely do that in secret, which they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child; as if darkness could hide from the all-seeing God. Are we not naturally careless of communion with God; yes, and averse to it? Never was there any communion between God and Adam's children, where the Lord himself had not the first word. If he were to let them alone--they would never inquire after him. Isaiah 57:17, "I hid myself." Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it—"He went on in the way of his heart."

(10.) How loath are men to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves? Was it not thus in the case before us? Genesis 3:10. Adam confesses his nakedness, which could not be denied; but says not one word of his sin—the reason of it was, he would gladly have hid it if he could. It is as natural for us to hide sin--as to commit it. Many sad instances thereof we have in this world; but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which "God will judge the secrets of men," Romans 2:16. Many a foul mouth will then be seen which is now "wiped, and says, I have done no wickedness," Proverbs 30:20.

(11.) Is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin, and transfer the guilt upon others? When God examined our guilty first parents, did not Adam lay the blame on the woman? and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? Genesis 3:12-13. Adam's children need not be taught this hellish policy; for before they can well speak, if they cannot get the fact denied, they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault, and lay the blame upon another. Nay, so natural is this to men, that in the greatest sins, they will lay the fault upon God himself; they will blaspheme his holy providence under the mistaken name of misfortune or bad luck--and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven's door! And was not this one of Adam's tricks after his fall? Genesis 3:12, "And the man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place; and then comes his confession—his apology is long—but his confession very short; it is all comprehended in one word, "and I did eat." How pointed and distinct is his apology, as if he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken! "The woman," says he, or "that woman," as if he would have pointed the judge to his own works, of which we read, Genesis 2:22. There was but one woman then in the world; so that one would think he needed not to have been so exact in pointing at her—yet she is as carefully marked out in his defense, as if there had been ten thousand.

"The woman whom you gave me:" here he speaks, as if he had been ruined with God's gift. And, to make the gift look the blacker, it is added to all this, "whom you gave to be with me," as my

constant companion, to stand by me as a helper. This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord, in giving him this gift.

And, after all, there is a new demonstrative here, before the sentence is complete; he says not, "The woman gave me," but "the woman--she gave me," emphatically; as if he had said, she, even she, gave me of the tree. This much for his apology. But his confession is quickly over, in one word, as he spoke it, "and I did eat." There is nothing here to point out himself, and as little to show what he had eaten. How natural is this black art to Adam's posterity! he who runs may read it. So universally does Solomon's observation hold true, Proverbs 19:3, "The foolishness of man perverts his way; and his heart frets against the Lord." Let us then call fallen Adam, father; let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image. To sum up this point, sufficiently confirmed by concurring evidence from the Lord's word, our own experience, and observation; let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature; and look to the second Adam, the blessed Jesus, for the application of his precious blood, to remove the guilt of our sin; and for the efficacy of his Holy Spirit, to make us new creatures, knowing that "except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

II. I proceed to inquire into the corruption of nature in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it? who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in his natural state is altogether corrupt—both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large, Romans 3:10-18. As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof; and is to be found in the understanding, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory.

1. Of the corruption of the UNDERSTANDING.

"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." Ephesians 4:18. "There is no one who understands." Romans 3:11. The understanding, that leading faculty, is despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes. There is none that understands," Romans 3:11. "Mind and conscience are defiled," Titus 1:15. The natural man's apprehension of divine things is corrupt. Psalms 50:21, "You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself." His judgment is corrupt, and cannot be otherwise, seeing his eye is evil—therefore the scriptures, to show that man does all wrong, says, "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes," Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25. And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be evil--being of a piece with his judgment, 2 Corinthians 10:5. But, to point out this corruption of the mind or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered:

1. There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines concerning everyone that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, "That he is blind, and cannot see afar off," 2 Peter 1:9. Hence the Spirit of God in the scriptures clothes, as it were, divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children, using similitudes, Hosea 12:11. This, though it does not cure—yet it proves this natural weakness in the minds of men. But there are not lacking plain proofs of it from experience. As,

(1.) How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them? There must be "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line," Isaiah 28:10. Try the same people in other things, they will be found "wiser in their generation than the children of light." They understand their work and business in the world as well as their neighbors; though they are very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God. Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things; though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ.

(2.) Consider those who have many advantages beyond the generality of mankind; who have had the benefits of good education and instruction; yes, and are blessed with the light of grace in that measure wherein it is ascribed to the saints on earth—yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion still remain in their minds! How often are they perplexed even as to practical truths, and understand as children in these things! It is a pitiful weakness that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us; and it must needs be a sinful weakness, since the law of God requires us to know and believe them.

(3.) What dangerous mistakes are to be found among men in concerns of the greatest weight! What woeful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those, who in other things are the wisest of men--yet these are notorious fools with respect to their soul’s interest? Matthew 9:25, "You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent." Many who are eagle-eyed in the trifles of time, are like owls and bats in the light of eternal realities. Nay, truly, the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion, out of which he never awakes, until either, by a new light darted from heaven into his soul, he comes to himself, Luke 15:17, or, in hell he lifts up his eyes in torment, Luke 16:23. Therefore, in scripture account, though he be ever so wise, he is a fool, and a simple one.

2. Man’s understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things. Man, at the instigation of the devil, attempting to break out a new light in his mind, Genesis 3:5, instead of that, broke up the doors of the bottomless pit, so as, by the smoke thereof, to be buried in darkness. When God first made man, his mind was a lamp of light; but now, when he comes to make him over again, in regeneration, he finds it darkness; Ephesians 5:8, "You were once darkness." Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness covers the whole—it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is your case, whoever you are, who are not born again. That you may be convinced in this matter, take the following proofs of it:

Proof 1. The darkness which was upon the face of the world, before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the Sun of Righteousness upon the earth. When Adam by his sin had lost that primitive light with which he was endued at his creation, it pleased God to make a glorious revelation of his mind and will to him, as to the way of salvation, Genesis 3:15. This was handed down by him, and other godly fathers, before the flood—yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation, as to carry off all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in Noah’s family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of the mind prevailed again, and the light

decayed, until it died away among the generality of mankind, and was preserved only among the posterity of Shem. And even with them it had nearly set, when God called Abraham from serving other gods, Joshua 24:15. God gives Abraham a more full and clear revelation, which he communicates to his family, Genesis 18:19; yet the natural darkness wears it out at length, except that it was preserved among the posterity of Jacob. They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness so prevailed, as to leave them very little sense of true religion; and there was a necessity for a new revelation to be made to them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that, now and then, during the time from Moses to Christ. When Christ came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, and the true light with them, were within an enclosure, Psalms 147:19-20. Between them and the Gentile world, there was a partition wall of God's making, namely, the ceremonial law—and upon that was reared up another of man's own making, namely, a rooted enmity between the parties, Ephesians 2:14-15. If we look abroad outside the enclosure, and except those proselytes of the Gentiles, who by means of some rays of light breaking forth upon them from within the enclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshiped the true God—but did conform to the Mosaic rites, we see nothing but "dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty," Psalms 74:20. Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world, and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. They were drowned in superstition and idolatry, and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number, that above thirty thousand are reckoned to have been worshiped by the men of Europe alone. Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, "the world by" that "wisdom know not God," 1 Corinthians 1:21, and all their researches in religion were but groping in the dark, Acts 17:27.

If we look within the enclosure, and except a few that were groaning and "waiting for the consolation of Israel," we shall see gross darkness on the face of that generation. Though "to them were committed the oracles of God," yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied; but the knowledge of those things, wherein the life of religion lies, was lost. Masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration, John 3:10. Their religion was to build on their birth-privileges, as children of Abraham, Matthew 3:9, to glory in their circumcision, and other external ordinances, Php 3:2-3, and to "rest in the law," Romans 2:17, after they had, by their false glosses, cut it so short, as they might outwardly go well near to the fulfilling of it, Matthew 5:1-48.

Thus was darkness over the face of the world, when Christ, the true light, came into it; and so is darkness over every soul, until he as the day-star, arises in the heart. The latter is an evidence of the former. What—but the natural darkness of men's minds, could still thus wear out the light of external revelation, in a matter upon which eternal happiness depends? Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives—but how quickly they lost the knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are of infinitely more weight and worth! When the teaching of patriarchs and prophets was ineffectual, it became necessary for them to be taught of God himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding. But that it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation, there were but very few converted by Christ's preaching, who spoke as never man spoke," John 12:37-38. The great cure remained to be performed, by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles; who, according to the promise, John 14:12, were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we shall find, that by applying the remedy to the soul, for the cure of bodily

distempers, as in the case of "the man sick of the palsy," Matthew 9:2, he plainly discovered, that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul. I find a miracle wrought upon one who was born blind, performed in such a way, as seems to have been designed to let the world see it, as in a glass, their case and cure, John 9:6, "He made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds, than eyes closed up with earth? Isaiah 44:18, "He has shut their eyes:" the word properly signifies, he has plastered their eyes; as the house in which the leprosy had been, was to be plastered, Leviticus 14:42. Thus the Lord's word reveals the design of that strange work; and by it, shows us, that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off this clay in the pool of Siloam—no other water will serve this purpose. If that pool had not represented him, whom the Father sent into the world to open the blind eyes, Isaiah 42:7, I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of the name; which, he says, signifies sent, John 9:7. So we may conclude, that the natural darkness of our minds is such as there is no cure for—but from the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eye-salve only can make us see, Revelation 3:18.

Proof 2. Every natural man's heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, however refined he may appear in the sight of men. Says the apostle Paul, "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Titus 3:3; and yet, at the time which this text refers to, "he was blameless," touching the righteousness which is in the law, Php 3:6. This is a plain evidence that "the eye is evil, the whole body being full of darkness," Matthew 6:23. The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world, like so many blind men, who will neither take a guide, nor can guide themselves; and therefore are falling over this and the other precipice, into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness, until they are pierced through with many sorrows. Some are sticking in the mire of sensuality. Some are dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit. Every one stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other; all of them are running themselves upon the sword-point of justice, while they eagerly follow where unmortified passions and affections lead them. And all the while some are lying along in the way, others are coming up, and falling headlong over them. Therefore, "woe unto you" blind "world because of offences," Matthew 18:7.

Errors in judgment swarm in the world because it is "night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness—for though Christianity has fixed that matter in point of principle—yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment. All men agree in the desire of being happy; but, among the unrenewed men, concerning the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men; "each of us having turned to his own way," Isaiah 53:6. They are like the blind men of Sodom, around Lot's house, all were seeking to find the door; some grope one part of the wall for it, some another—but none of them could certainly say, he had found it; so the natural man may stumble on any good—but the chief good.

Look into your own unregenerate heart, and there you will see all turned upside down—heaven lying below, and earth at top. Look into your life, there you may see how you are playing the madman, snatching at shadows, and neglecting the substance—eagerly flying after that which is not, and slighting that which is, and will be forever.

Proof 3. The natural man is always as a workman left without light; either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch your heart at any time you will, and you will find it either weaving the spider's web, or hatching cockatrice eggs, Isaiah 59:5, roving through the world, or digging into the pit; filled with vanity, or else with vileness; busy doing nothing, or what is worse than nothing. A sad sign of a dark mind.

Proof 4. The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things. He knows not what a God he has to do with—he is unacquainted with Christ, and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in spiritual realities. Yes—but some such can speak of them to good purpose; so might those Israelites of the trials, signs, and miracles, which their eyes had seen, Deuteronomy 29:3; to whom nevertheless, the Lord had "not given a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto that day," Deuteronomy 29:4. Many a man who bears the name of a Christian, may make Pharaoh's confession of faith, Exodus 5:2, "I know not the Lord," neither will he let go what he commands them to part with. God is with them, as a prince in disguise among his subjects, who meets with no better treatment from them than if they were his fellows, Psalms 50:21. Do they know Christ, or see his glory, and any beauty in him, for which he is to be desired? If they did, they would not slight him as they do—a view of his glory would so darken all created excellence, that they would take him for and instead of all, and gladly close with him, as he offers himself in the gospel, John 4:13; Psalms 9:10; Matthew 13:44-46. Do they know what sin is, who nurse the serpent in their bosom, hold fast their deceit, and refuse to let it go? I own, indeed, that they may have a natural knowledge of these things, as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ, whom they saw and conversed with; but there was a spiritual glory in him, perceived by believers only, John 1:14, and in respect of that glory, "the" unbelieving "world knew him not," John 1:10. The spiritual knowledge of these things, they cannot have; it is above the reach of the carnal mind. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." He may indeed discourse of them—but in no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. He has some notions of spiritual truths—but sees not the things themselves, which are wrapped up in the words of truth, 1 Timothy 1:7, "Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." In a word, natural men fear, seek, confess--they know not what. Thus you may see man's understanding naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things.

3. There is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil, whereby it comes to pass, that whatever difficulties it finds while occupied about things truly good--it acts with a great deal of ease in evil, as being in that case in its own element, Jeremiah 4:22. The carnal mind drives heavily on in the thoughts of holiness—but furiously in the thoughts of evil. While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it; but when once it has got over the hedge, it is as a bird got out of a cage, and becomes a free-thinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind, and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woeful bias to evil.

Proof 1. As when a man by a violent stroke on the head loses his sight, there arises to him a kind of false light whereby he seems to see a thousand airy nothings; so man, being struck blind to all that is truly good for his eternal interest, has a light of another sort brought into his mind—his eyes are opened, knowing evil; and so are the words of the tempter verified, Genesis 3:5. The words of the prophet are plain—"They are wise to do evil—but to do good they have no knowledge,"

Jeremiah 4:22. The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief; there are not any so simple as to lack skill to contrive ways to gratify their lusts, and ruin their souls, though the power of everyone's hand cannot reach to put their devices in execution. No one needs to be taught this black art; but, as weeds grow up of their own accord in the neglected ground, so does this wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish, James 3:15, grow up in the minds of men, by virtue of the corruption of their nature.

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

1 John 3:9, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin;" he does it willfully and habitually, for "his seed remains in him." But, on the other hand, "A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom," Proverbs 10:23. Evil comes to him easily—and why—but because he is a fool, and has not wisdom, which would mar the contrivances of darkness! The more natural a thing is, the more easily it is done.

Proof 2. Let the corrupt mind have but the advantage of one's being employed in, or present at, some piece of service for God, that so the device, if not in itself sinful—yet may become sinful by its unseasonableness—it will quickly fall upon some device or expedient, by its starting aside, which deliberation, in season, could not produce. Such a devilish dexterity has the carnal mind in devising what may most effectually divert men from their duty to God.

Proof 3. Does not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things in imagination, as if the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood, and would turn everything into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions, look into their own souls, and they will find this bias in their minds. Therefore the idolatry which did of old, and still does, so much prevail in the world, is an incontestible evidence—for it plainly shows, that men naturally would have a visible deity, and see what they worship, and therefore they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image," etc., Romans 1:23. The reformation of these nations, blessed be the Lord for it, has banished idolatry, and images too, out of our churches; but heart-reformation only can break down mental idolatry, and banish the more subtle and refined image worship, and representations of the Deity, out of the minds of men. The world, in the time of its darkness, was never more prone to the former, than the unsanctified mind is to the latter. Hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above, and all spiritual things.

Proof 4. What a difficult task is it to detain the carnal mind before the Lord! how averse is it to entertain good thoughts, and dwell in the meditation of spiritual things! If a person be driven, at any time, to think of the great concerns of his soul, it is not harder work to hold in an unruly hungry beast, than to hedge in the carnal mind, that it get not away to the vanities of the world again. When God is speaking to men by his word, or they are speaking to him in prayer, does not the mind often leave them before the Lord, like so many "idols that have eyes—but see not, and ears—but hear not." The carcass is laid down before God—but the world gets away the heart; though the eyes be closed, the man sees a thousand vanities—the mind, in the meantime, is like a

bird got loose out of a cage, skipping from bush to bush; so that, in effect, the man never comes to himself until he is gone from the presence of the Lord.

01.02a1 The SINFULNESS of man's natural statecont'd

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Say not, it is impossible to get the mind fixed; it is hard, indeed—but not impossible—grace from the Lord can do it, Psalms 108:1; agreeable objects will do it. A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive; the worldly man’s mind is in little hazard of wandering, when he is contriving his business, casting up his accounts or counting his money; if he answers you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you, he was busy; his mind was fixed. Were we admitted into the presence of a king, to petition for our lives, we should be in no hazard of not paying attention. But this is the case, the carnal mind, employed about any spiritual good, is out of its element, and therefore cannot fix on spiritual realities.

Proof 5. But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks like glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself, 2 Peter 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, which cannot cease from sin." Their eyes cannot cease from sin--that is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast, which cannot be held in when once it has got out its head. Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on its favorite object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will are for its retreat. For then it is in its own element; and to draw it off from its impurities, is like drawing a fish out of the water, or rending a limb from a man. It runs like fire set to a train of powder, that rests not until it can get no farther.

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

I am aware that some question the sinfulness of these things; but can it be thought they are consistent with that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam, and in Jesus

Christ, and should be in everyone? It is the corruption of nature, then, which makes filthy dreamers condemned, Jude, ver. 8. Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep—in a dream he prayed, in a dream he made the best choice; both were accepted of God, 1 Kings 3:5-15. And if a man may, in his sleep, do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also, when asleep, do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this, and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, "the law upon the heart," Proverbs 6:20-21. "When you sleep," says he, Proverbs 6:22, "it shall keep you," that is, from sinning in your sleep--from sinful dreams—for a man's being kept from sin, not his being kept from affliction, is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart, Psalms 119:11. And thus the whole verse is to be understood, as appears from Proverbs 6:23, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Now, the law is a lamp and light, as it guides in the way of duty; and instructing reproofs from the law are the way of life, as they keep from sin—they guide not into the way of peace—but as they lead into the way of duty; nor do they keep a man out of trouble—but as they keep him from sin. Remarkable is the particular which Solomon instances, namely, the sin of uncleanness, "to keep you from the evil woman," etc., Proverbs 6:24, which is to be joined to Proverbs 6:22, enclosing Proverbs 6:23 in a parenthesis as some versions have it. These things may suffice to convince us of the natural bias of the mind to evil.

4. There is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths, and an aversion to receive them. It is as little a friend to divine truths, as it is to holiness. As for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them, which opposes their entry; and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. God has made a revelation of his mind and will to sinners, concerning the way of salvation; he has given us the doctrine of his holy word—but do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not; "for he who believes not on the Son of God, believes not God," as is plain from 1 John 5:10. They believe not the promises of the word; they look on them, in effect, only as fair words—for those who receive them are thereby made "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter 1:4. The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven, to draw sinners unto God, and to waft them over into the promised land; but they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the word. As men traveling in deserts carry fire about with them, to frighten away wild beasts, so God has made his law a fiery law, Deuteronomy 33:2, surrounding it with threats of wrath—but men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves; and will needs touch the fiery smoking mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart.

I doubt not but most, if not all of you, who are yet in the black state of nature, will here plead, Not Guilty! but remember, the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are, that they believed Moses, John 9:28-29. But he confutes their confidence, roundly telling them, John 5:46, "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me." If you believe the truths of God, you dared not to reject, as you do, Him who is truth itself. The very difficulty you find in assenting to this truth, discovers that unbelief which I am charging you with. Has it not proceeded so far with some at this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with impudence and impiety, openly to reject all true religion? Surely it is "out of the abundance of the heart their mouth speaks." But, though you set not your mouth against the heavens, as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign, until overcoming grace brings your minds to the belief of

the truth. To convince you in this point, consider these three things:

Proof 1. How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination, by the special operation of the Spirit of Christ, leading them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly luster! How have you learned the truths of religion, which you pretend to believe? You have them merely by the benefit of external revelation, and by education; so that you are Christians, just because you were not born and bred in a Pagan—but in a Christian country. You are strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in your hearts; therefore you are still unbelievers. "It is written in the Prophets, They shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, who has heard, and has learned of the Father--comes unto me," says our Lord, John 6:45. Now, you have not come to Christ, therefore you have not been taught of God—you have not been so taught, and therefore you have not come; you believe not. Behold the revelation from which the faith, even of the fundamental principles in religion, springs, Matthew 16:16-17, "You are Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed are you, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you—but my Father who is in heaven." If ever the Spirit of the Lord takes you in hand, to work in you that faith which is of the operation of God, it may be, that as much time will be spent in pulling down the old foundation, as will make you find the necessity of the working of his mighty power, to enable you to believe the very foundation-principles which now you think you make no doubt of, Ephesians 1:19.

Proof 2. How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith, such as it was, in time of temptation and trial! See how they fall, like stars from heaven, when Antichrist prevails! 2 Thessalonians 2:12, "God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth." They fall into damning delusions; because they never really believed the truth, though they themselves, and others too, thought they did believe it. That house is built on the sand, and that faith is but ill-founded, which cannot stand—but is quite overthrown, when the storm comes.

Proof 3. Consider the utter inconsistency of most men’s lives with the principles of religion which they profess—you may as soon bring east and west together, as their principles and practice. Men believe that fire will burn them; and therefore, they will not throw themselves into it. But the truth is, most men live as if they thought the gospel was a mere fable, and the wrath of God, revealed in his word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness, a mere scarecrow. If you believe the doctrines of the word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before the Lord? how is it that you are so little concerned about this weighty point, whether you be born again or not? Most live as they were born--and are likely to die as they live--and yet live in peace. Do such people believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state? Do they believe that they are children of wrath? Do they believe that there is no salvation without regeneration, and no regeneration but what makes a man a new creature?

If you believe the promises of the word, why do you not embrace them, and seek to enter into the promised rest? What sluggard would not dig for a hidden treasure, if he really believed that he might so obtain it? Men will work and toil for a maintenance, because they believe that by so doing they shall get it; yet they will be at no pains for the eternal weight of glory! Why? Because they do not believe the word of promise! Hebrews 4:1-2. If you believe the threatenings, how is it that you live in your sins; live out of Christ, and yet hope for heaven? Do such people believe God to be the

holy and just One, who will by no means clear the guilty? No, no; none believe; none, or next to none, believe what a just God the Lord is, and how severely he punishes.

5. There is in the mind of man, a natural proneness to lies and falsehood, which favor his lusts. "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies," Psalms 58:3. We have this, with the rest of the corruption of our nature, from our first parents. God revealed the truth to them—but through the solicitation of the tempter, they first doubted, then disbelieved it--and embraced a lie instead of it. For an incontestable evidence hereof, we may see the first article of the devil's creed, "you shall not surely die," Genesis 3:4, which was obtruded by him on our first parents, and by them received, naturally embraced by their posterity, and held fast, until light from heaven obliges them to quit it. It spreads itself through the lives of natural men—who, (unless their consciences are awakened), walk after their own lusts, still retaining the principle, "That they shall not surely die." And this is often improved to such perfection, that man says, in the face of the denounced curse, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," Deuteronomy 29:19. Whatever advantage the truths of God have over error, by means of education or otherwise, error has always, with the natural man, this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, "O that it were true!" so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it. The true doctrine is, "the doctrine that is according to godliness," 1 Timothy 6:3, and "the truth which is after godliness," Titus 1:1. Error is the doctrine which is according to ungodliness; for there is not an error in the mind, nor an untruth vented in the world, in matters of religion—but has an affinity to the corruption of the heart, according to that saying of the apostle, 2 Thessalonians 2:12, "They believed not the truth," but had pleasure in unrighteousness. So that truth and error, being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error, by this means, has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Therefore, it is not strange that men reject the simplicity of gospel truths--and greedily embrace error and external pomp in religion, seeing these things are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart, and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. Hence also it is, that so many embrace atheistical principles; for none do it but in compliance with their sinful passions; none but those, whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

6. Man is naturally high-minded; for when the gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Corinthians 10:5. Humility of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature; but is planted by the finger of God in a renewed heart, and learned from the humble Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself, and what is his own—for the stroke which he has got by his fall in Adam, has produced a false light, whereby molehills about him appear like mountains; and a thousand airy beauties present themselves to his deluded mind. "Vain man would be wise," so he accounts himself, and so he would be accounted by others, "though man be born like a wild donkey's colt," Job 11:12. His way is right, because it is his own—for "every way of man is right in his own eyes," Proverbs 21:2. His state is good, because he knows none better; he is alive without the law, Romans 7:9, and therefore his hope is strong, and his confidence firm. It is another tower of Babel, reared up against heaven; and it will not fall, while the power of darkness can hold it up. The word batters it—yet it stands—one while breaches are made in it—but they are quickly repaired; at another time, it is all made to shake—but still it is kept up; until either God himself by his Spirit raises a heart-quake within the man, which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon

another, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, or death batters it down, and pulls down the foundation of it, Luke 16:23. And as the natural man thinks highly of himself, so he thinks basely of God, whatever he pretends, Psalms 50:21, "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself." The doctrine of the gospel, and the mystery of Christ, are foolishness to him; and in his practice he treats them as such, 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 2:14. He brings the word and the works of God, in the government of the world, before the bar of his carnal reason; and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned, Hosea 14:9. Sometimes the ordinary restraints of Providence are taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind—and, in that case, it is like an ant's nest, uncovered and disturbed; doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings, crowd in it, and cannot be overcome by all the arguments brought against them, until power from on high subdues the mind, and stills the mutiny of the corrupt principles.

Thus much of the corruption of the understanding; which, although the half is not told, may discover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now, "Ichabod; for the glory is departed from it," 1 Samuel 4:21. Consider this, you who are in the state of nature, and groan out your case before the Lord, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon you, lest you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom? What do your attainments in religion avail--while your understanding lies wrapped up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life? Whatever be the natural man's gifts or attainments, we must, as in the case of the leper, Leviticus 13:44, "pronounce him utterly unclean, his plague is in his head." But that is not all; it is in his heart too—his will is corrupted, as I shall soon show.

01.02a2 The SINFULNESS of man's natural state cont'd

2. Of the corruption of the WILL. The will, that commanding faculty, which at first was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor, and rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man, "wholly a holy seed;" but now it is "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine." It was originally placed in due subordination to the will of God, as was shown before; but now it is wholly gone aside. However some magnify the power of free-will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline in no way answer, and a deep insight into the corruption of nature, given by the inward operation of the Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free-will. To open up this plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered:

1. There is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man’s will is in Satan’s fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave, Ephesians 2:1. We deny him not a power to choose, pursue, and act what is good, as to the matter; but though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing aright and well, John 15:5. Christ says, "Without me," that is, separate from me, as a branch from the stock, as both the word and context will bear, "you can do nothing;" which means, nothing truly and spiritually good. His very choice and desire of spiritual things, is carnal and selfish, John 6:26, "You seek me--because you ate of the loaves and were filled." He not only does not come to Christ—but "he cannot come," John 6:44. And what can he do acceptable to God, who believes not on him whom the Father has sent? To prove this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things:

Proof 1. How often does the light so shine before men’s eyes, that they cannot but see the good which they should choose, and the evil which they should refuse—and yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than as if they were arrested by some invisible hand! They see what is right—yet they follow, and cannot but follow what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too—yet their will cannot be brought up to it—their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it; so that they sigh and go backward, notwithstanding their light. If it be not thus, how is it that the word and way of holiness meet with such poor reception in the world? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety and a holy life, which seem to have weight even with the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side? Although the existence of a heaven and a hell were only probable, it would be sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable of being determined thereto by mere reason—but men, "knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same—but have pleasure in them that do them," Romans 1:31. And how is it that those who magnify the power of free-will, do not confirm their opinion before the world, by an ocular demonstration in a practice as far above others in holiness, as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please; and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment, and leap out of Delilah’s lap into Abraham’s bosom? Whatever use some make of that principle, it

does of itself, and in its own nature, cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life. It may be observed, that the generality of the hearers of the gospel, of all denominations, are plagued with it; for it is a root of bitterness, natural to all men—from whence spring so much fearlessness about the soul's eternal state, so many delays and excuses in that weighty matter, whereby much work is laid up for a deathbed by some, while others are ruined by a legal walk, and neglect the life of faith, and the making use of Christ for sanctification; all flowing from the persuasion of sufficient natural abilities. So agreeable is it to corrupt nature.

Proof 2. Let those, who, by the power of the spirit of bondage, have had the law opened before them in its spirituality, for their conviction, speak and tell, if they found themselves able to incline their hearts toward it, in that case; nay, whether the more that light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more unable to comply with it. There are some who have been brought unto "the place of the breaking forth," who are yet in the devil's camp, who from their experience can tell, that light let into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith; and could give their testimony here, if they would. But take Paul's testimony concerning it, who, in his unconverted state, was far from believing his utter inability for good; but learned it by experience, Romans 7:8-13. I own, the natural man may have a kind of love to the letter of the law—but here lies the stress of the matter, he looks on the holy law in a carnal dress; and so, while be embraces the creature of his own fancy, he thinks that he has the law. But in very deed he is without the law—for as yet he sees it not in its spirituality; if he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fall in with, until changed by the power of grace.

2. There is in the unrenewed will an aversion to good. Sin is the natural man's element; he is as unwilling to part with it as fish are to come out of the water on to dry land. He not only cannot come to Christ—but he will not come, John 5:40. He is polluted, and hates to be washed, Jeremiah 13:27, "Will you not be made clean? when shall it once be?" He is sick—yet utterly averse to the remedy—he so loves his disease--that he loathes the Physician. He is a captive, a prisoner, and a slave--but he loves his conqueror, his jailor, and master—he is fond of his fetters, prison, and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For proof of the aversion to good in the will of man, I will instance in some particulars:

Proof 1. The adverseness of children. Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in! How averse to restraint! The world can bear witness, that they are "as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke:" and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke, than to bring young children under discipline, and make them tamely submit to be restrained in sinful liberty. Everybody may see in this, as in a glass, that man is naturally wild and wilful, according to Zophar's observation, Job 11:12, that "man is born like a wild donkey's colt." What can be said more? He is like a colt, the colt of an donkey, the colt of a wild donkey. Compare Jeremiah 2:24, "A wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?"

Proof 2. What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to pious duties! and what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them! It is a pain to it--to leave the world but a little to come before God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things--to spend it upon the one thing needful. Men often go to God in duties, with their faces towards the world; and when their

bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill "going after their covetousness," Ezekiel 33:31.

They are soon wearied of well-doing; for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company, or let them be enjoying a lust; time seems to them to fly, and drive furiously, so that it is gone before they are aware. But how heavily does it pass, while a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath lasts! The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week, with many; therefore, they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do; that the day may be made of a tolerable length—for their hearts say within them, "When will the Sabbath be gone?" Amos 8:5. The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day—hence, when duty is over, they are like men eased of a burden; and when sermon is ended, many have neither the grace nor the good manners to stay until the blessing is pronounced—but, like the beasts, their head is away, as soon as a man puts his hand to loose them; and why? because, while they are at ordinances, they are, as Doeg, "detained before the Lord," 1 Samuel 22:7.

Proof 3. Consider how the will of the natural man rebels against the light, Job 24:13. Light sometimes enters in, because he is not able to keep it out—but he loves darkness rather than light. Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up; but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted. Then lusts rise against light—corruption and conscience encounter, and fight as in the field of battle, until corruption getting the upper hand, conscience is forced to turn its back; convictions are murdered, and truth is made and held prisoner, so that it can create no more disturbance. While the word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in upon him, and his spirit is wounded in greater or lesser measure—but these convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrows sticking in his conscience; and at length, one way or other, gets them out, and makes himself whole again. Thus, while the light shines, men, naturally averse to it, and willfully shut their eyes--until God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they become proof against his word and providences too—so, go where they will, they can sit at ease; there is never a word from heaven to them, that goes deeper than their ears. Hosea 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols—let him alone."

Proof 4. Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, to bring them from "the power of Satan unto God." Zion's King gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, "in the day of his power," Psalms 110:2-3. None come to him—but such as are drawn by a divine hand, John 6:44. When the Lord comes to the soul, he finds the strong man keeping the house, and a deep peace and security there, while the soul is fast asleep in the devil's arms. But "the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered." Therefore, the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his bosom. Now, the sinner is at great pains to put a fair face on a black heart, to shake off his fears, to make headway against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of his soul's case. If he cannot so rid himself from them, carnal reason is called in to help, and urges, that there is no ground for such great fear; all may be well enough yet; and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many. When the sinner is beat from this false reasoning, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company--he resolves to leave his sins—but cannot think of breaking off so soon; there is time enough, and he will do it afterwards. Conscience says, "Today if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts;"

but he cries, "Tomorrow, Lord; tomorrow, Lord;" and "not just now, Lord;" until that now is never likely to come. Thus many times he comes from his prayers and confessions, with nothing but a bosom full of sharper convictions; for the heart does not always cast up the sweet morsel, as soon as confession is made with the mouth, Judges 10:10-16. And when conscience obliges him to part with some lusts--other lusts are kept as right eyes and right hands, and there are rueful looks after those that are put away; as it was with the Israelites, who with bitter hearts remembered "the fish they freely ate in Egypt," Numbers 11:5. Nay, when he is so pressed, that he must needs say before the Lord, that he is content to part with all his idols; the heart will be giving the tongue the lie. In a word, the soul, in this case, will shift from one thing to another; like a fish with the hook in its jaws, until it can do no more, for power is come to make it yield, as "the wild donkey in her month," Jeremiah 2:24.

3. There is in the will of man a natural "proneness to evil," a woeful bent towards sin. Men naturally are "bent to backsliding from God," Hosea 11:7. They hang, as the word is, towards backsliding; even as a hanging wall, whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant. Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other; and leave the unrenewed will to itself, it will choose sin, and reject holiness. This is no more to be doubted, than that water, poured on the side of a hill will run downward, and not upward; or that a flame will ascend, and not descend.

Proof 1. Is not the way of evil the first way which children go? Do not their inclinations plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no ability to hide them? In the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look asquint, hell-ward, not heaven-ward. As soon as it appears that we are rational creatures it appears that we are sinful creatures, Psalms 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born." Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child—but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven into our very nature. The knot will not unloose; it must be broken asunder by strokes. Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away; and if it be not driven far away, the heart and it will meet and knit again. Not that the rod of itself will do this—the sad experience of many parents testifies the contrary; and Solomon himself tells you, Proverbs 27:22, "Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding him like grain with a pestle, you will not remove his folly from him;" it is so bound in his heart. But the rod is an ordinance of God, appointed for that end; which, like the word, is made effectual by the Spirit’s accompanying his own ordinance.

This, by the way, shows that parents, in administering correction to their children, have need, first of all, to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of great solemnity, setting about it with much dependence on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual.

Proof 2. How easily are men led aside to sin! Those who are not persuaded to be holy, are otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon—those whom the word cannot draw to holiness, are "caught in the Devil’s trap, having been captured by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26. Profane Esau, that cunning man, Genesis 25:27, was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, the more easy it is—so Christ’s yoke is easy to the saints, in so far as they are partakers of the divine nature—and sin is easy to the unrenewed man; but to learn to be holy, is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin; because the will naturally hangs towards evil, and is averse to good. A child can cause a round thing to roll, when

he cannot move a square thing of the same weight; for the roundness makes it fit for motion, so that it goes with a touch. Even so, men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is as a dead weight in the way of holiness. We must seek for the reason of this from the natural bent and disposition of the heart, whereby it is prone and bent to evil. Were man's will, naturally—but in equal balance to holiness and evil, the one might be embraced with as little difficulty as the other; but experience testifies it is not so. In the sacred history of the Israelites, especially in the Book of Judges, how often do we find them forsaking Jehovah, the mighty God, and doting upon the idols of the nations about them! But did ever any one of these nations grow fond of Israel's God, and forsake their own idols? No, no; though man is naturally given to changes, it is but from evil to evil, not from evil to good. Jeremiah 2:11-12 "Has any nation ever exchanged its gods for another god, even though its gods are nothing? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the Lord." Surely the will of man stands not in equal balance—but has a strong bent to the wrong side.

Proof 3. Consider how men go on still in the way of sin, until they are stopped, and that by another hand than their own; Isaiah 57:17, "I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways." If God withdraws his restraining hand, it is no doubt what way he will choose; for, observe it, the way of sin is the way of his heart—his heart naturally lies that way; it has a natural propensity to sin. As long as God allows them, they walk in their own way, Acts 14:16. The natural man is so fixed in his woeful choice, that there needs no more to show he is off from God's way, than to say he is upon his own.

Proof 4. Whatever good impressions are made on him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yes, harder than the nether-millstone in point of receiving of them; it is otherwise unstable as water, and cannot keep them. It works against the receiving of them; and, when they are made, it works them off, and returns to its natural bias; Hosea 6:4, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away." The morning cloud promises a heavy shower—but, when the sun arises, it vanishes; the sun beats upon the early dew--and it evaporates; so the husbandman's expectation is disappointed. Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction, or piercing conviction, obliges him, in some sort, to turn from his evil course—but his will not being renewed, piety is still against the grain with him, and therefore this goes off again, Psalms 78:34-37. Though a stone thrown up into the air may abide there a little while—yet its natural heaviness will bring it down again—so do unrenewed men return to their wallowing in the mire; because, though they washed themselves—yet their swinish nature was not changed. It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire, hard to make it keep alight; but it is harder than either of these to make the unrenewed will retain attained goodness; which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil.

Proof 5. Do the saints serve the Lord now, as they were accustomed to serve sin, in their unconverted state? Very far from it, Romans 6:20, "When you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness." Sin got all, and admitted no partner; but now, when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, there are still with them some deeds of the old man, showing that he is but dying in them; and hence their hearts often migive them, and slip aside unto evil, "when they would do good," Romans 7:21. They need to watch, and keep their hearts with all diligence; and their sad experience teaches them, "That he who trusts in his own heart is a fool," Proverbs 28:26. If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry?

4. There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity, in the will of man, to God himself, and his holy will, Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The will was once God's deputy in the soul, set to command there for him; but now it is set up against him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it. If the fruit hanging before one's eye is but forbidden, that is sufficient to draw the heart after it. Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned, that they take a pride in it, belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths; or larding their speeches with minced oaths; and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that would not excuse them. Pray, tell me,

(1.) What profit is there here? A thief gets something for his pains; a drunkard gets a belly-full; but what do you swearers get? Others serve the devil for pay; but you are volunteers, who expect no reward but your work itself, in affronting Heaven; and if you repent not, you will get your reward in full measure; when you go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there; nor will the covetous man's wealth follow him into the other world! you may drive on your old trade there; eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it.

(2.) What pleasure is there here—but what flows from your trampling on the holy law? Which of your senses does swearing and cursing gratify? If it gratifies your ears, it can only be by the noise it makes against the heavens. Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins of swearing, that we must needs conclude, your love to them, in this case, is a love to them for themselves, a devilish unhired love, without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, these are monsters of men—be it so; yet, alas! the world is full of such monsters; they are to be found almost everywhere. Allow me to say, they must be admitted as the mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven, Romans 3:14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Romans 3:19, "Now we know, that whatever things the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, young and old, to be proved by the testimony of Scripture, and their own consciences; namely, that whether they be professors or profane, seeing they are not born again, they are heart enemies, (1.) to God; (2.) to the Son of God; (3.) to the Spirit of God; and (4.) to the law of God. Hear this, you careless souls, who live at ease in your natural state.

(1.) You are enemies to GOD in your mind, Colossians 1:21. You are not as yet reconciled to him; the natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hidden, and you do not perceive it.

[1.] You are enemies to the very being of God, Psalms 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God." The proud man wishes that none were above himself; the rebel, that there were no king; and the unrenewed man, who is a mass of pride and rebellion, that there were no God. He says it in his heart, he wishes it were so, though he is ashamed and afraid to speak it out. That all natural men are such fools, appears from the apostle's quoting a part of this psalm, "That every mouth may be stopped," Romans 3:10-19. I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks on God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart rises

not against God being his Benefactor—but his enmity will quickly appear when he looks on God as the Governor and Judge of the world, binding him, under the pain of the curse, to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death, because of his sin. Listen in this case to the voice of the heart, and you will find it to be, "there is no God!"

[2.] You are enemies to the nature of God, Job 21:14, "They say unto God--Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways!" Men set up for themselves, an idol of their own fancy, instead of the true God, and then fall down and worship it. They love him no other way than Jacob loved Leah, while he mistook her for Rachel. Every natural man is an enemy to God, as he is revealed in his word. The infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true being, is not the God whom he loves—but the God whom he loathes. In fact, men naturally are haters of God, Romans 1:30; if they could, they certainly would make him otherwise than what he is. Now, upon this I would, for your conviction, propose to your conscience a few queries.

1st, How are your hearts affected towards the infinite purity and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, which the tongue will not speak out. If you are not partakers of his holiness, you cannot be reconciled to it. The Pagans finding that they could not be like God in holiness, made their gods like themselves in filthiness; and thereby they show what sort of a God the natural man would have. God is holy; can an unholy creature love his unspotted holiness? Nay, it is the righteous only that can "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," Psalms 97:12. God is light; can creatures of darkness rejoice therein? Nay, "everyone that does evil hates the light," John 3:20. "For what communion has light with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14.

2nd, How are your hearts affected towards the justice of God? There is not a man, who is wedded to his lusts, as all the unregenerate are—but would desire to blot out the God of justice. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge? or an unjustified sinner, a just God? No, he cannot, Luke 7:47, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Hence, as men cannot get the doctrine of his justice blotted out of the Bible, it is such an eye-sore to them, that they strive to blot it out of their minds—they ruin themselves by presuming on his mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness, wherein they may stand before his justice; but "think he will do nothing at all to them," Zephaniah 1:12.

3rd, How are your hearts affected towards the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol, than the all-seeing God; therefore, they do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord. They no more love the all-seeing, every-where present God, than the thief loves to have the judge witness to his evil deeds. If it could be carried by votes, God would be voted out of the world, and closed up in heaven; for the language of the carnal heart is, "The Lord does not see us. The Lord has abandoned the earth," Ezekiel 8:12.

4th, How are your hearts affected towards the truth and veracity of God? There are but few in the world who can heartily subscribe to this sentence of the apostle, Romans 3:4, "Let God be true—but every man a liar." Nay, truly, there are many who, in effect, hope that God will not be true to his word. There are thousands who hear the gospel, who hope to be saved, and think all safe with them for eternity--who never had any experience of the new birth, nor do at all concern themselves in the question, Whether they are born again, or not? a question that is likely to wear out from among us at this day. Our Lord’s words are plain and peremptory, "Except a man be born

again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." What are such hopes, then—but real hopes that God--with profoundest reverence be it spoken--will recall his word, and that Christ will prove a liar? What else means the sinner, who, "when he hears the words of the curse, blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart?" Deuteronomy 29:19.

5th, How are your hearts affected towards the power of God? None but new creatures will love him for it, on a fair view thereof; though others may slavishly fear him upon account of it. There is not a natural man—but would contribute, to the utmost of his power, to the building of another tower of Babel, to hem it in. On these grounds I declare every unrenewed man an enemy to the true God.

(2.) You are enemies to the SON of God. That enmity to Christ is in your hearts, which would have made you join the farmers who killed the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard. "Am I a dog?" you will say, that I should so treat my sweet Savior? So did Hazael ask in another case; but when he had the temptation, he was a dog to do it. Many call Christ their dear Savior, whose consciences can bear witness, that they never derived as much sweetness from him as from their sweet lusts, which are ten times dearer to them than Christ. He is no other way dear to them, than as they abuse his death and sufferings for the peaceable enjoyment of their lusts; that they may live as they please in the world; and when they die, be kept out of hell. Alas! it is but a mistaken Christ that is sweet to you, whose souls loathe that Christ who is the "brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person." It is with you as it was with the carnal Jews, who delighted in him, while they mistook his errand into the world, fancying that he would be a temporal deliverer to them, Malachi 3:1. But when he "sat as a refiner and purifier of silver," Malachi 3:2-3, and rejected them as reprobate silver, who thought to have had no small honor in the kingdom of the Messiah, his doctrine galled their consciences, and they had no rest until they imbrued their hands in his blood. To open your eyes in this point, which you are so averse to believe, I will lay before you the enmity of your hearts against Christ in all his offices.

1st, Every unregenerate man is an enemy to Christ in his PROPHETICAL office. He is appointed of the Father as the great Prophet and Teacher; but not upon the call of the world, who, in their natural state, would have unanimously voted against him—therefore, when he came, he was condemned as a seducer and blasphemer. For evidence of this enmity, I will instance two things.

Proof 1. Consider the treatment which he meets with when he comes to teach souls inwardly by his Spirit. Men do what they can to stop their ears, like the deaf adder, that they may not hear his voice. They "always resist the Holy Spirit." "They desire not the knowledge of his ways;" and therefore bid him "depart from them." The old calumny is often raised upon him on that occasion, John 10:20, "He is mad, why listen to him?" Soul concern is accounted, by many, nothing else but distraction, and melancholy fits; men thus blaspheming the Lord’s work, because they themselves are beside themselves, and cannot judge of those matters.

Proof 2. Consider the entertainment which he meets with when he comes to teach men outwardly by his word. His written word, the Bible, is slighted. Christ has left it to us, as the book of our instruction, to show us what way we must steer our course, if we would go to Immanuel’s land. It is a lamp to light us through a dark world, to eternal light. And he has enjoined us, to search it with that diligence wherewith men dig into mines for silver and gold, John 5:39. But, ah! how is this sacred treasure profaned by many! They ridicule that holy word, by which they must be judged at

the last day; and will rather lose their souls than their jest, dressing up the conceits of their wanton wits in scripture phrases.

Many exhaust their spirits in reading romances, and their minds pursue them, as the flame does the dry stubble; while they have no heart for, nor relish to, the holy word; and therefore seldom take a Bible in their hands. What is agreeable to the vanity of their minds, is pleasant and exciting; but what recommends holiness to their unholy hearts, makes their spirits dull and flat. What pleasure they find in reading a profane ballad, or story-book, to whom the Bible is entirely tasteless! Many lay by their Bibles with their sabbath-day's clothes; and whatever use they have for their clothes, they have none for their Bibles, until the return of the Sabbath. Alas! the dust on your Bibles is a witness now, and will, at the last day, be a witness of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a Prophet.

Besides all this, among those who usually read the scripture, how few are there that read it as the word of the Lord to their souls, and keep up communion with him in it! They do not make his statues their counselors, nor does their particular case send them to their Bibles. They are strangers to the solid comforts of the scriptures. And when they are dejected, it is something else than the word that revives them—as Ahab was cured of his sullen fit, by the obtaining of Naboth's vineyard for him.

Christ's word preached is despised. The treatment which most of the world, to whom it has come, have always given it, is that which is mentioned, Matthew 22:5, "They made light of it;" and for his sake, they are despised whom he employs to preach it; whatever other face men put upon their contempt of the ministry. John 15:20-21, "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me." But though the earthen vessels, wherein God has put the treasure, be turned, with many, into vessels wherein there is no pleasure—yet why is the treasure itself slighted? But slighted it is, and that with a witness, this day. "Lord, who has believed our report? To whom shall we speak?" Alas! when they come to ordinances for the most part, it is but to appear, or as the word is, to be seen before the Lord; and to tread his courts, namely, as a company of beasts would do, if they were driven into them, Isaiah 1:12, so little reverence and awe of God appear on their spirits. Many stand like brazen walls before the word, in whose corrupt hearts the preaching of the word makes no broach. Nay, not a few are growing worse and worse, under "precept upon precept;" and the result of all is, "They go and fall backward, and are broken, and snared, and taken," Isaiah 28:13. What tears of blood are sufficient to lament that the gospel of "the grace of God," is thus "received in vain!" Ministers are but the voice of one crying; the speaker is in heaven; and speaks to you from heaven by men—why do you "refuse him who speaks?" Hebrews 12:25. God has made our master Christ, heir of all things, and we are sent to seek for a spouse for him. There is none so worthy as he; none more unworthy than they to whom this match is proposed; but the prince of darkness is preferred before the Prince of Peace! A dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam's fall, more terrible than as if the sun, moon, and stars had been forever wrapped up in blackness of darkness; and there we would have eternally lain, had not this grace of the gospel, as a shining sun, appeared to dispel it, Titus 2:11. But yet we fly like night-owls from it; and, like the wild beasts, lay ourselves down in our dens—when the sun arises, we are struck blind with the light thereof; and, as creatures of darkness, love darkness

rather than light. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Christ, in his prophetical office.

2ndly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his PRIESTLY office. He is appointed of the Father a priest forever; that, only by his sacrifice and intercession, sinners may have peace with, and access to God. But Christ crucified is a stumbling-block, and foolishness to the unrenewed part of mankind, to whom he is preached, 1 Corinthians 1:23. They are not for him as the "new and living way;" nor is he, by the voice of the world, "a High-priest over the house of God." Corrupt nature goes quite another way to work.

Proof 1. None of Adam's children are naturally inclined to receive the blessing in borrowed robes; but would always, according to the spider's motto, "owe all to themselves:" and so climb up to heaven on a thread spun for themselves. For they "desire to be under the law," Galatians 4:21, and "go about to establish their own righteousness," Romans 10:3. Man naturally looks on God as a great master; and himself as his servant, who must work and win heaven as his wages. Hence, when conscience is awakened, he thinks that, to the end he may be saved, he must answer the demands of the law, serve God as well as he can, and pray for mercy wherein he comes short. And thus many come to duties, who never come out of them to Jesus Christ.

Proof 2. As men naturally think highly of their duties, that seem to them to be well done, so they look for acceptance with God, according as their work is done, not according to the share they have in the blood of Christ. "Therefore have we fasted, say they, and you see not?" They value themselves on their performances and attainments; yes, their very opinions in religion, Php 3:4; Php 3:7, taking to themselves what they rob from Christ the great High priest.

Proof 3. The natural man, going to God in duties, will always be found either to go without a Mediator, or with more than the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ. Nature is blind, and therefore venturesome; it sets men a-going immediately to God without Christ; to rush into his presence, and put their petitions in his hand, without being introduced by the secretary of heaven, or putting their requests into his hand. So fixed is this disposition in the unrenewed heart, that when many hearers of the gospel are conversed with upon the point of their hopes of salvation, the name of Christ will scarcely be heard from their mouths. Ask them how they think to obtain the pardon of sin? they will tell you they beg and look for mercy, because God is a merciful God; and that is all they have to confide in. Others look for mercy for Christ's sake—but how do they know that Christ will take their plea in hand? Why, as the papists have their mediators with the Mediator, so have they. They know he cannot but do it; for they pray, confess, mourn, and have great desires, and the like; and so have something of their own to commend them unto him—they were never made poor in spirit, and brought empty-handed to Christ, to lay the stress of all on his atoning blood.

3rdly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his KINGLY office. The Father has appointed the Mediator, "King in Zion," Psalms 2:6. All to whom the gospel comes are commanded, on their highest peril, "to kiss the Son," and submit themselves unto him, Psalms 2:12. But the natural voice of mankind is, "Away with him;" as you may see, Psalms 2:2-3, "They will not have him to reign over them," Luke 19:14.

Proof 1. The workings of corrupt nature would wrest the government out of his hands. No sooner was he born—but, being born a King, Herod persecuted him, Matthew 2:1-23. And when he was crucified, they "set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews,"

Matthew 27:37. Though his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world—yet they cannot allow him a kingdom within a kingdom, which acknowledges no other head or supreme but the Royal Mediator. They make bold with his royal prerogatives, changing his laws, institutions, and ordinances; modeling his worship according to the devices of their own hearts, introducing new offices and officers into his kingdom, not to be found in "the book of the manner of his kingdom;" disposing of the external government thereof, as may best suit their carnal designs. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Zion's King.

Proof 2. How unwilling are men, naturally, to submit unto, and be hedged in by, the laws and discipline of his kingdom! As a king, he is a lawgiver, Isaiah 33:22, and has appointed an external government, discipline, and censures, to control the unruly, and to keep his professed subjects in order, to be exercised by officers of his own appointment, Matthew 18:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17. But these are the great eye-sores of the carnal world, who love sinful liberty, and therefore cry out, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psalms 2:3. Hence this work is found to be, in a special manner, a striving against the stream of corrupt nature, which, for the most part, puts such a face on the church, as if there were no king in Israel, everyone doing that which is right in his own eyes.

Proof 3. However natural men may be brought to feign submission to the King of saints—yet lusts always retain the throne and dominion in their hearts, and they are serving divers lusts and pleasures, Titus 3:3. None—but those in whom Christ is formed, do really put the crown on his head, and receive the kingdom of Christ within them. His crown is "the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals." Who are they, whom the power of grace has not subdued, who will not allow him to set up, and to put down, in their souls, as he will? Nay, as for others, will never absolutely resign themselves to his government, until conquered in a day of power. Thus you may see, that the natural man is an enemy to Jesus Christ in all his offices. But O, how hard it is to convince men in this point! They are very loath to believe. And, in a special manner, the enmity of the heart against Christ in his priestly office seems to be hidden from the view of most of the hearers of the gospel. There appears to be a peculiar malignity in corrupt nature against this office of his. It may be observed, that the Socinians, those enemies of our blessed Lord, allow him to be properly a Prophet and a King—but deny him to be properly a Priest. And this is agreeable enough to the corruption of our nature—for, under the covenant of works, the Lord was known as a Prophet or Teacher, and also as a King or Ruler; but not at all as a Priest. So man knows nothing of the mystery of Christ, as the way to the Father, until it is revealed to him—and when it is revealed, the will rises up against it; for corrupt nature is opposed to the mystery of Christ, and the great contrivance of salvation, through the crucified Savior, revealed in the gospel. For clearing of which weighty truth, let these four things be considered:

[1.] The soul's falling in with the grand scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, and setting the matters of salvation on that footing before the Lord, is declared by the Scriptures of truth to be an undoubted mark of a real saint, who is happy here, and shall be happy hereafter, Matthew 11:6, "Blessed is he whoever shall not be offended in me." 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Php 3:3, "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Now, how could this be, if nature could comply with that grand device?

[2.] Corrupt nature is the very reverse of the gospel plan. In the gospel, God proposes Jesus Christ as the great means of re-uniting man to himself; he has named him as the Mediator, one in whom he is well pleased, and will have none but him, Matthew 17:5; but nature will have none of him, Psalms 71:11. God appointed the place of meeting for the reconciliation, namely, the flesh of Christ; accordingly, God was in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:19, as the tabernacle of meeting, to make up the peace with sinners—but natural men, although they should die forever, will not come to Christ, John 5:40, "You will not come to me that you might have life." In the way of the gospel, the sinner must stand before the Lord in an imputed righteousness—but corrupt nature is for an inherent righteousness; and, therefore, so far as natural men follow after righteousness, they follow after "the law of righteousness," Romans 9:31-32; and not after "the Lord our righteousness." Nature is always for building up itself, and to have some ground for boasting; but the great design of the gospel is to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting, Romans 3:27. The sum of our natural religion is, to do good from and for ourselves, John 5:44; the sum of the gospel religion is, to deny ourselves, and to do good from and for Christ, Php 1:21.

[3.] Everything in nature is against believing in Jesus Christ. What beauty can the blind man discern in a crucified Savior, for which he is to be desired? How can the will, naturally impotent, yes, and averse to good, make choice of him? Well may the soul then say to him in the day of the spiritual siege, as the Jebusite said to David in another case, "Except you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in hither," 2 Samuel 5:6. The way of nature is to go into oneself for all; according to the fundamental maxim of unsanctified morality, "That a man should trust in himself;" which, according to the doctrine of faith, is mere foolishness—for so it is determined, Proverbs 28:26, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." Now faith is the soul’s going out of itself for all—and this, nature, on the other hand, determines to be foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:18-23. Therefore there is need of the working of mighty power to cause sinners to believe, Ephesians 1:19; Isaiah 53:1. We see the promises of welcome to sinners, in the gospel-covenant, are ample, large, and free, clogged with no conditions, Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17. If they cannot believe his bare word, he has given his oath upon it, Ezekiel 33:11; and, for their greater assurance, he has annexed seals to his sworn covenant, namely, the holy sacraments—so that no more could be demanded of the most faithless person in the world, to make us believe him, than the Lord has condescended to give us, to make us believe himself. This plainly speaks nature to be against believing; and those who flee to Christ for a refuge, to have need of strong consolation, Hebrews 6:18, to balance their strong doubts, and propensity to unbelief. Farther, also, it may be observed, how in the word sent to a secure, graceless generation, their objections are answered beforehand; and words of grace are heaped one upon another, as you may read, Isaiah 55:7-9; Joel 2:13. Why? Because the Lord knows, that when these secure sinners are thoroughly awakened, doubts, fears, and carnal reasonings against believing, will be getting into their breasts, as thick as dust in a house, raised by sweeping a dry floor.

[4.] Corrupt nature is bent towards the way of the law, or covenant of works; and every natural man, so far as he sets himself to seek after salvation, is engaged in that way, and will not leave it, until beat from it by divine power. Now the way of salvation by works, and that of free grace in Jesus Christ, are inconsistent. Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Galatians 3:12, "And the law is not of faith; but the man that does them shall live in

them." Therefore, if the will of man naturally inclines to the way of salvation by the law, it lies cross to the gospel plan. And that such is the natural bent of our hearts, will appear, if these following things be considered:

(1st.) The law was Adam's covenant; and he knew no other, as he was the head and representative of all mankind, who were brought into it with him, and left under it by him, though without strength to perform the condition thereof. Hence, this covenant is interwoven with our nature; and though we have lost our father's strength—yet we still incline to the way he was set upon, as our head and representative in that covenant—that is, by doing, to live. This is our natural religion, and the principle which men naturally take for granted, Matthew 19:16, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

(2ndly.) Consider the opposition that has always been made in the world, against the doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ--by men setting up the way of works; thereby discovering the natural tendency of the heart. It is manifest, that the great design of the gospel plan is to exalt the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, Romans 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." See Ephesians 1:6, and Ephesians 2:7-9. All gospel truths center in Christ—so that to learn the truth, is to learn Christ, Ephesians 4:20, and to be truly taught it, is to be taught as "the truth is in Jesus," Ephesians 4:21. All dispensations of grace and favor from heaven, whether to nations or particular people, have still had something about them proclaiming the freedom of grace; as in the very first separation made by the divine favor, Cain, the elder brother is rejected, and Abel, the younger, accepted. This shines through the whole history of the Bible—but, as true it is, this has been the point principally opposed by corrupt nature. One may well say, that, of all errors in religion, since Christ the seed of the woman was preached, this of works, in opposition to free grace in him, was the first that lived, and, it is likely, will be the last that dies. There have been vast numbers of errors, which have sprung up, one after another; whereof, at length, the world became ashamed and weary, so that they died away—but this has continued, from Cain, the first author of this heresy, unto this day; and never lacked some who clave to it, even in the times of greatest light.

I do not, without ground, call Cain the author of it; who, when Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a bloody offering of the firstlings of his flock, like the publican smiting on his bosom, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," advanced with his thank-offering of the fruit of the ground, Genesis 4:3-4, like the proud Pharisee with his "God, I thank you," etc. For what was the cause of Cain's wrath, and of his murdering Abel? was it not that he was not accepted of God for his work? Genesis 4:4-5. "And why did he slew him? Because his own works wore evil and his brother's righteous," 1 John 3:12; that is, done in faith, and accepted, when his were done without faith, and rejected, as the apostle teaches, Hebrews 11:4. So he wrote his indignation against justification and acceptance with God through faith, in opposition to works, in the blood of his brother, to convey it down to posterity. And, since that time, the unbloody sacrifice has often swimmed in the blood of those who rejected it. The promise made to Abraham, of the seed in which all nations should be blessed, was so overclouded among his posterity in Egypt, that the generality of them saw no need of that way of obtaining the blessing, until God himself confuted their error by a fiery law from Mount Sinai, which "was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come," Galatians 3:19. I need not insist on telling you, how Moses and the prophets had still much to do, to lead the people off from the conceit of their own righteousness. Deuteronomy 9:1-29 is entirely spent on that purpose. They were very gross in that point in our

Savior's time, in the time of the apostles, when the doctrine of free grace was most clearly preached, that error lifted up its head in the face of the clearest light; witness the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And since that time it has not been lacking; Popery being the common sink of former heresies, and the heart and life of that delusion. And, finally, it may be observed, that always as the church declined from her purity otherwise, the doctrine of free grace was obscured proportionably.

(3rdly.) Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law, in opposition to Christ, that, as the tainted vessel turns the taste of the purest liquor put into it, so the natural man turns the very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. The ceremonial law was to the Jews a real gospel, which held blood, death, and translation of guilt, before their eyes continually, as the only way of salvation; yet their very table, that is, their altar, with the several ordinances pertaining thereto, Malachi 1:12, was a snare unto them, Romans 11:9, while they used it to make up the defects in their obedience to the moral law; and clave to it so, as to reject him, whom the altar and sacrifices pointed them to, as the subject of all—even as Hagar, whose duty was only to serve, was, by their father, brought into her mistress's bed; not without a mystery in the purpose of God, "for these are the two covenants," Galatians 4:24. Thus is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by papist and other enemies to the doctrine of free grace. And indeed, however natural men's heads may be set right in this point, as surely as they are out of Christ; their faith, repentance, and obedience, such as they are, are placed by them in the room of Christ and his righteousness; and so trusted to, as if by these they fulfilled a new law.

(4thly.) Great is the difficulty, in Adam's sons, of their parting with the law as a covenant of works. None part with it, in that respect—but those whom the power of the spirit of grace separates from it. The law is our first husband, and gets everyone's virgin love. When Christ comes to the soul, he finds it married to the law, so as it neither can nor will be married to another, until it be obliged to part with the first husband, as the apostle teaches, Romans 7:1-4. Now, that you may see what sort of a parting this is, consider,

[1st.] It is death, Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:19. Entreaties will not prevail with the soul here; it says to the first husband, as Ruth to Naomi, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." And here sinners are true to their word; they die to the law, before they are married to Christ. Death is hard to everybody; but what difficulty, do you imagine, must a loving wife, on her deathbed, find in parting with her husband, the husband of her youth, and with the dear children she has brought forth to him? The law is that husband; all the duties performed by the natural man are these children. What a struggle, as for life, will be in the heart before they are parted? I may have occasion to touch upon this afterwards; in the mean time, take the apostle's short but pithy description of it, Romans 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." They go about to establish their own righteousness, like an eager disputant in schools, seeking to establish the point in question; or, like a tormentor, extorting a confession from one upon the rack. They go about to establish it, to make it stand—their righteousness is like a house built on the sand; it cannot stand—but they would have it to stand. It falls; they set it up again—but still it tumbles down on them; yet they cease not to go about to make it stand. But why all these pains about a tottering righteousness? Because, such as it is, it is their own. What sets them against Christ's righteousness? Why, that would make them free grace's debtors for all; and

that is what the proud heart can by no means submit to. Here lies the stress of the matter, Psalms 10:4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek," to read it without the supplement, in other terms, it means, "He cannot beg, and to beg he is ashamed." Such is the struggle before the soul dies to the law. But what speaks yet more of this woeful disposition of the heart, nature oft-times gets the mastery of the disease—insomuch that the soul, which was likely to have died to the law while convictions were sharp and piercing, fatally recovers of the happy and promising sickness; and, what is natural, cleaves more closely than ever to the law, even as a wife brought back from the gates of death, would cleave to her husband. This is the outcome of the exercises of many about their souls' case—they are indeed brought to follow duties more closely; but they are as far from Christ as ever, if not farther.

[2ndly.] It is a violent death, Romans 7:4, "you are become dead to the law," being killed, slain, or put to death, as the word bears. The law itself has a great hand in this; the husband gives the wound, Galatians 2:19, "I through the law am dead to the law." The soul that dies this death, is like a loving wife matched with a rigorous husband; she does what she can to please him—yet he is never pleased—but harasses and beats her until she breaks her heart, and death sets her free—this will afterwards more fully appear.

Thus it is made evident, that men's hearts are naturally bent to the way of the law, and lie cross to the gospel method—and the second article of the charge against you who are unregenerate is verified, namely, that you are enemies to the Son of God.

(3.) You are enemies to the SPIRIT of God. He is the Spirit of holiness—the natural man is unholy, and loves to be so, and therefore resists the Holy Spirit, Acts 7:51. The work of the Spirit is to convince the world of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John 16:8. But O, how do men strive to ward off these convictions, as much as they ward off a blow, threatening the loss of a right eye, or a right hand. If the Spirit of the Lord darts them in, so that they cannot avoid them; the heart says, in effect, as Ahab to Elijah, whom he both hated and feared, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And indeed, they treat him as an enemy, doing their utmost to stifle convictions, and to murder these harbingers that come to prepare the Lord's way into the soul. Some fill their hands with business, to put their convictions out of their heads, as Cain, who set about building a city; some put them off with delays and fair promises, as Felix did; some will sport them away in company, and some sleep them away. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification; whose work it is to subdue lusts, and burn up corruption—how then can the natural man, whose lusts are to him as his limbs, yes, as his life, fail of being an enemy to him?

(4.) You are enemies to the LAW of God. Though the natural man desires to be under the law, as a covenant of works, choosing that way of salvation, in opposition to the mystery of Christ; yet as it is a rule of life to him, requiring universal holiness, and forbidding all manner of impurity, he is an enemy to it—"is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Romans 8:7. For,

[1.] There is no unrenewed man, who is not wedded to some one lust or another, which his heart can by no means part with. Now, that he cannot bring up his inclinations to the holy law, he would fain have the law brought down to his inclinations—a plain evidence of the enmity of the heart against it. Therefore, "to delight in the law of God after the inward man," is proposed in the word as a mark of a gracious soul, Romans 7:22; Psalms 1:2. It is from this natural enmity of the heart against the law, that all the pharisaical glosses upon it have arisen; whereby the commandment,

which is in itself exceeding broad, has been made very narrow, to the intent that it might be the more agreeable to the natural disposition of the heart.

[2.] The law, laid home on the natural conscience in its spirituality, irritates corruption. The nearer it comes, nature rises the higher against it. In that case it is as oil to the fire, which instead of quenching it, makes it flame the more—"When the commandment came, sin revived," says the apostle, Romans 7:9. What reason can be assigned for this—but the natural enmity of the heart against the holy law? Unmortified corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it rages.

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

(5.) There is in the will of man contumacy against the Lord. Man's will is naturally wilful in an evil course; he will have his will, though it should ruin him—it is with him, as with the leviathan, Job 41:29, "Darts are counted as stubble; he laughs at the shaking of a spear." The Lord calls to him by his word; says to him, as Paul to the jailor, when he was about to kill himself, "Do yourself no harm:" sinner, "why will you die?" Ezekiel 18:31. But they will not hearken; everyone turns to his course, "as the horse rushes into the battle," Jeremiah 8:6. We have a promise of life, in form of a command, Proverbs 4:4, "Keep my commandments and live:" it speaks impenitent sinners to be self-destroyers, wilful self-murderers. They transgress the command of living; as if one's servant should willfully starve himself to death, or greedily drink a cup of poison, which his master commands him to forbear—even so do they; they will not live, they will die, Proverbs 8:36, "All those who hate me, love death."

O, what a heart is this! It is a stony heart, Ezekiel 36:26, hard and inflexible as a stone—mercies melt it not, judgments break it not; yet it will break before it bend. It is an insensible heart—though there be upon the sinner a weight of sin, which makes the earth to stagger; although there is a weight of that wrath on him, which makes the devils to tremble; yet he goes lightly under the burden; he feels not the weight any more than a stone would, until the Spirit of the Lord quickens him so far as to feel it.

(6.) The unrenewed will is wholly perverse, in reference to man's chief and highest end. The natural man's chief end is not God—but himself. The being of man is merely relative, dependent, borrowed—he has neither being nor goodness originally from himself; but all he has is from his God, as the first cause and spring of all perfection, natural or moral. Dependence is woven into his very nature—so that if God were totally to withdraw from him, he would dwindle into a mere nothing. Seeing then whatever man is, he is by God, surely in whatever he is, he should be to God, as the waters which came from the sea, do of course return there again.

Thus man was created, directly looking to God, as his chief end—but, failing into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself; and, like a traitor usurping the throne, he gathers in the rents of the crown to himself. This infers a total apostasy and universal corruption in man; for where the chief and last end is changed, there can be no goodness there. This is the case of all men in their natural state, Psalms 14:2-3, "The Lord looked down to see if there were any that did seek God. They are all gone aside" from God; they seek not God—but themselves. Though many fair shreds of morality are to be found among them—yet "there is none who does good, no, not one;" for

though some of them in appearance run well—yet they are still off the way; they never aim at the right mark. They are "lovers of their own selves," 2 Timothy 3:2, "more than God," 1 Timothy 3:4. Therefore Jesus Christ, having come into the world to bring men back to God again, came to bring them out of themselves in the first place, Matthew 16:24. The godly groan under this woeful disposition of the heart—they acknowledge it, and set themselves against it, in its subtle and dangerous insinuations. The unregenerate, though most insensible of it, are under the power of self; and wherever they turn themselves, they cannot move beyond the circle of self—they seek themselves, they act for themselves; their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever springs they come, all run into, and meet in the dead sea of self.

Most men are so far from making God their chief end, in their natural and civil actions, that in these matters, God is not in all their thoughts. Their eating and drinking, and such like natural actions, are for themselves; their own pleasure or necessity, without any higher end, Zechariah 7:6, "Did you not eat for yourselves?" They have no eye to the glory of God in these things, as they ought to have, 1 Corinthians 10:31. They do not eat and drink to keep up their bodies for the Lord’s service; they do them not because God has said, "You shall not kill:" neither do those drops of sweetness, which God has put into the creature, raise up their souls towards that ocean of delights that is in the Creator; though they be a sign hung out at heaven’s door, to tell men of the fullness of goodness that is in God himself, Acts 14:17. But it is self, and not God, that is sought in them, by natural men. And what are the unrenewed man’s civil actions, such as buying, selling, working, etc.—but fruit to himself? Hosea 10:1. So marrying, and giving in marriage, are reckoned among the sins of the old world, Matthew 24:38, for they have no eye to God therein, to please him; but all they had in view was to please themselves, Genesis 6:3.

01.02a3 The SINFULNESS of man's natural statecont'd

Finally, self is natural men’s highest end, in their religious actions. They perform duties for a name, Matthew 6:1-2, or some other worldly interest, John 6:26. Or if they be more refined, it is their peace, and at most their salvation from hell and wrath or their own eternal happiness, that is their chief and highest end, Matthew 19:16-22. Their eyes are blind, that they cannot see the glory of God. They seek God indeed—yet not for himself—but for themselves. They seek him not at all—but for their own welfare—so their whole life is woven into one web of practical blasphemy; making God the means, and self their end, yes, their chief end.

Thus I have given you a crude draught of man’s will, in his natural state, drawn by scripture, and men’s own experience. Call it no more Naomi—but Marah; for bitter it is, and a root of bitterness. Call it no more free-will—but slavish lust; free to evil—but free from good, until regenerating grace loosens the bands of wickedness. Now, since all must be wrong, and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt; I shall briefly dispatch what remains, as following, of course, on the corruption of these prime faculties of the soul.

01.02a3 The SINFULNESS of man's natural statecont'd1

3. The Corruption of the AFFECTIONS.

"Men loved darkness." John 3:19. "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." 2 Timothy 3:4. The affections are corrupted. The unrenewed man’s affections are wholly disordered and distempered—they are as the unruly horse, that either will not receive, or violently runs away with, the rider. So man’s heart naturally is a mother of abominations, Mark 7:21-22, "For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly." The natural man’s affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be--fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven--which his heart should be set on, Acts 9:5. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven; and therefore God calls to him to turn. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love. He joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in. He glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory. He abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor, Proverbs 2:13-15.

They hit the point indeed, as Caiaphas did in another case, who cried out against the apostles, as men that turned the world upside down, Acts 17:6; for that is the work which the gospel has to do in the world, where sin has put all things so out of order, that heaven lies under, and earth a-top. If the unrenewed man’s affections be set on lawful objects, then they are either excessive or defective. Lawful enjoyments of the world have sometimes too little—but mostly too much of them; either they get not their due, or, if they do, it is measure pressed down, and running over. Spiritual things have always too little of them. In a word, they are never right; only evil.

Now, here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken--a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, the man should not stoop; the will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not; and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defense of the corrupt will, say, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, until a day of power comes, in which he is made a new creature.

4. Corruption of the CONSCIENCE. The conscience is corrupt and defiled, "to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled." Titus 1:15. Conscience is an evil eye, which fills one’s mind with much darkness and confusion; being naturally unable to do its office—until the Lord, by letting in new light to the soul, awakens the conscience, it remains sleepy and inactive. Conscience can never do its work—but according to the light it has to work by. Therefore, seeing the natural man cannot spiritually discern spiritual things, 1 Corinthians 2:14, the conscience naturally is quite useless in that point; being cast into such a deep sleep, which nothing but saving illumination from the Lord can set it on work in that matter. The light of the natural conscience in good and evil, sin and duty--is very defective; therefore, though it may check for grosser sins—yet, to the more subtle workings of sin, it cannot check them, because it discerns them not. Thus, conscience will fly in the face of many, if at any

time they are drunk, swear, neglect prayer; or are guilty of any gross sin; who otherwise have a profound peace, though they live in the sin of unbelief, and are strangers to spiritual worship, and the life of saving faith. Natural light being but faint and languishing in many things which it reaches, conscience, in that case, shoots like a stitch in one's side, which quickly goes off—its incitements to duty, and checks for, and struggles against sin, are very remiss, which the natural man easily gets over. But because there is a false light in the dark mind, the natural conscience following the same, will call evil good, and good evil, Isaiah 5:20. So conscience is often like a blind and furious horse, which violently runs down himself, his rider, and all that comes in his way. John 16:2, "Whoever kills you, will think that he does God service." When the natural conscience is awakened by the Spirit of conviction, it will indeed rage and roar, and put the whole man in a dreadful consternation; awfully summon all the powers of the soul to help in a strait; make the stiff heart to tremble, and the knees to bow; set the eyes weeping, the tongue confessing; and oblige the man to cast out the goods into the sea, which he apprehends are likely to sink the ship of the soul, though the heart still goes after them. Yet it is an evil conscience which naturally leads to despair, and will do it effectually, as in Judas' case; unless either lusts prevail over it, to lull it asleep, as in the case of Felix, Acts 24:25, or the blood of Christ prevail over it, sprinkling and purging it from dead works, as in the case of all true converts, Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:22.

5. Corruption of the MEMORY.

Even the memory bears evident marks of sin and corruption. What is good and worthy to be remembered, makes but slender impression, so that impression easily wears off; the memory, as a leaking vessel, lets it slip. As a sieve that is full when in the water, lets all go when it is taken out--just so is the memory with respect to spiritual things. But how does the memory retain what ought to be forgotten! Sinful things so bear in themselves upon it, that though men would sincerely have them out of mind--yet they stick there like glue! However forgetful men are in other things, it is hard to forget an injury. So the memory often furnishes new fuel to old lusts; makes men in old age remember the sins of their youth, while it presents them again to the mind with delight, which thereupon returns to its former lusts. Thus the memory is like a riddle--which lets through the pure grain, and keeps the refuse.

Thus far of the corruption of the soul--the mind, will, affections, conscience, and memory.

6. Corruption of the BODY.

"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood." Romans 3:13-15. The body itself also is partaker of corruption and defilement. Therefore the Scripture calls it sinful flesh, Romans 8:3. The natural temper, or rather distemper of our bodies have a natural tendency to sin. The body incites to sin, betrays the soul into snares, yes, is itself a snare to the soul. The body is a furious beast, of such a temper, that it will not be beat down, kept under control, and brought into subjection. It will cast the soul into much sin and misery. The body serves the soul in many sins. Its members are weapons of unrighteousness, whereby men fight against God. The eyes and ears are open doors, by which impure motions and sinful desires enter the soul. The tongue is "a world of iniquity," "an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison," by it the impure heart vents a great deal of its filthiness. The throat is "an open grave." The feet run the devil's errands. The belly is made a god, Php 3:19, not only by drunkards and riotous livers—but

by every natural man. So the body naturally is an agent for the devil, and a storehouse of weapons against the Lord. To conclude—man by nature is wholly corrupted, "from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in him." As in a dunghill, every part contributes to the corruption of the whole, so the natural man grows still worse and worse--the soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul; and every faculty of the soul (the mind, will, affections, conscience and memory) serves to corrupt another more and more.

There is a vileness in the body, Php 3:21, which, as to the saints, will never be removed, until it is melted down in the grave, and cast into a new form at the resurrection, to come forth a spiritual body. This much for the second general head.

III. I shall show HOW man's nature comes to be thus corrupted. The heathens perceived that man's nature was corrupted; but how sin had entered, they could not tell. But the Scripture is very plain on that point, Romans 5:12; Romans 5:19, "By one man--sin entered into the world. By one man's disobedience--many were made sinners." Adam's sin corrupted man's nature, and leavened the whole lump of mankind. We putrefied as in Adam as our root. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed—the vine turned into the vine of Sodom, and so the grapes became grapes of gall. Adam, by his sin, became not only guilty—but corrupt; and so transmits guilt and corruption to his posterity, Genesis 5:3; Job 14:4. By his sin he stripped himself of his original righteousness, and corrupted himself; we were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works; we were in him seminally, as our natural head; hence we fell in him, and by his disobedience were made sinners, as Levi, in the loins of Abraham paid tithes, Hebrews 7:9-10. His first sin is imputed to us; therefore, we are justly left under the lack of his original righteousness, which being given to him as a common person, he cast off by his sin—and this is necessarily followed, in him and us, by the corruption of the whole nature; righteousness and corruption being two contraries, one of which must needs always be in man, as a subject capable thereof. And Adam, our common father, being corrupt, we are so too; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"

Although it is sufficient to prove the righteousness of this dispensation, that it was from the Lord, who does all things well; yet, to silence the murmurings of proud nature, let these few things farther be considered.

1. In the covenant wherein Adam represented us, eternal happiness was promised to him and his posterity, upon condition of Adam's perfect obedience, as the representative of all mankind—whereas, if there had been no covenant, they could not have pleaded eternal life upon their most perfect obedience—but might have been, after all, reduced to nothing; notwithstanding, by natural justice, they would have been liable to God's eternal wrath, in case of sin. Who in that case would not have consented to that representation?

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

3. He had the strongest natural affection to engage him, being our common father.

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

5. If he had stood, we would have had the light of his mind, the righteousness of his will, and holiness of his affections, with entire purity, transmitted unto us; we could not have fallen; the crown of glory, by his obedience, would have been forever secured to him and his descendants. This is evident from the nature of a federal representation, and no reason can be given why, seeing we are lost by Adam's sin, we would not have been saved by his obedience. On the other hand, it is reasonable, that he falling, we would with him bear the loss.

6. Those who quarrel with this dispensation, must renounce their part in Christ; for we are no otherwise made sinners by Adam, than we are made righteous by Christ, from whom we have both imputed and inherent righteousness. We no more made choice of the second Adam for our head and representative in the second covenant, than we did of the first Adam in the first covenant.

Let none wonder that such a horrible change could be brought on by one sin of our first parents; for thereby they turned away from God, as their chief end, which necessarily infers a universal depravation. Their sin was a complication of evils, a total apostasy from God, a violation of the whole law—by it they broke all the ten commands at once.

1. They chose new gods. They made their belly their God--by their sensuality. Self became their God--by their ambition. Yes, and the devil their God--by believing him, and disbelieving their Maker.

2. Though they received—yet they observed not that ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. They despised that ordinance so plainly enjoined them, and would needs carve out to themselves how to serve the Lord.

3. They took the name of the Lord their God in vain; despising his attributes, his justice, truth, power, etc. They grossly profaned the holy tree; abused his word, by not giving credit to it; abused that creature of his which they should not have touched; and violently misconstrued his providence, as if God, by forbidding them that tree, had been standing in the way of their happiness; therefore he did not allow them to escape his righteous judgment.

4. They remembered not the Sabbath to keep it holy—but put themselves out of a condition to serve God aright on his own day; neither kept they that state of holy rest wherein God had put them.

5. They cast off their relative duties—Eve forgets herself, and acts without the advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation, and confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. They honored not their Father in heaven; and therefore, their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. They ruined themselves, and all their posterity.

7. They gave themselves up to lust and sensuality.

8. They took away what was not their own, against the express will of the great Owner.

9. They bore false witness, and lied against the Lord, before angels, devils, and one another; in effect giving out, that they were harshly dealt with, and that God grudged their happiness.

10. They were discontented with their lot, and coveted a forbidden object; which ruined both them and theirs.

Thus was the image of God on man defaced all at once.

IV. I shall now APPLY this doctrine of the corruption of nature.

Use 1. For INFORMATION. Is man's nature wholly corrupted? Then,

1. No wonder that the grave opens its devouring mouth for us, as soon as the womb has cast us forth; and that the cradle is turned into a coffin, to receive the corrupt lump—for we are all, in a spiritual sense, dead-born; yes, and filthy, Psalms 14:3, foul, vile, and stinking as a corrupt thing, as the word imports. Then let us not complain of the miseries we are exposed to at our entrance into the world, nor of the continuance of them while we are in the world. Here is the venom which has poisoned all the springs of earthly enjoyments we have to drink of. It is the corruption of man's nature, which brings forth all the miseries of human life, in churches, states, and families, and in men's souls and bodies.

2. Behold here, as in a mirror, the spring of all the wickedness, profanity, and formality, which is in the world; the source of all the disorders in your own heart and life. Everything acts like itself, agreeable to its own nature; and so corrupt man acts corruptly. You need not wonder at the sinfulness of your own heart and life, nor at the sinfulness and perverseness of others—if a man be crooked, he cannot but halt; and if the clock be set wrong, how can it point the hour aright?

3. See here, why sin is so pleasant, and true religion such a burden to carnal men—sin is natural, holiness not so. Oxen cannot feed in the sea, nor fish in the fruitful fields. A swine brought into a palace would soon get away again, to wallow in the mire; and corrupt nature tends ever to impurity.

4. Learn from this, the nature and necessity of regeneration.

First, This discovers the NATURE of regeneration, in these two things:

1. It is not a partial—but a total change, though imperfect in this life. Your whole nature is corrupted; therefore, the cure must go through every part. Regeneration makes not only a new head, for knowledge—but a new heart, and new affections, for holiness. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!" 2 Corinthians 5:17. If a man, having received many wounds, should be cured of them all, save one only, he might bleed to death by that one as well as by a thousand—so, if the change go not through the whole man, it is naught.

2. It is not a change made by human industry—but by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. A man must be born of the Spirit, John 3:5. Minor diseases may be cured by men; but those which are birth-defects, not without a miracle, John 9:32. The change wrought upon men by good education, or forced upon them by a natural conscience, though it may pass among men for a saving

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

Secondly, This also shows the NECESSITY of regeneration. It is absolutely necessary, in order to salvation, John 3:4, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; but you are wholly unclean, while in your natural state. If every member of your body were disjointed, each joint must be loosened before the members can be set right again. This is the case of your soul, as you have heard—therefore, you must be born again; otherwise you shall never see heaven, unless it be afar off, as the rich man in hell did. Deceive not yourself; no mercy of God, no blood of Christ, will bring you to heaven in your unregenerate state—for God will never open a fountain of mercy to wash away his own holiness and truth; nor did Christ shed his precious blood, to blot out the truths of God, or to overturn God's measures about the salvation of sinners. Heaven! What would you do there, you who are not born again? you who are no ways fitted for Christ the head? That would be a strange sight! a holy head, and members wholly corrupt! a head full of treasures of grace, and members wherein are nothing but treasures of wickedness! a head obedient to the death, and heels kicking against heaven. You are no better adapted for the society above, than beasts are for converse with men. You are a hater of true holiness; and at the first sight of a saint there, would cry out, "Have you found me, O my enemy!" Nay, the unrenewed man, if it were possible he could go to heaven in that state, would go to it no otherwise than now he comes to the duties of holiness; that is, leaving his heart behind him.

Use 2. For LAMENTATION. Well may we lament your case, O natural man! for it is the saddest case one can be in out of hell. It is time to lament for you; for you are dead already, dead while you live—you carry about with you a dead soul in a living body; and because you are dead, you can not lament your own case. You are loathsome in the sight of God; for you are altogether corrupt; you have no good in you. Your soul is a mass of darkness, rebellion, and vileness, before the Lord. You think, perhaps, that you have a good heart to God, good inclinations, and good desires; but God knows there is nothing good in you—"Every imagination of your heart is only evil continually." You can do no good; you can do nothing but sin. For,

1. You are the servant of sin, Romans 6:17, and therefore free from righteousness, Romans 6:20. Whatever righteousness is, poor soul, you are free from it; you do not, you can not meddle with it. You are under the dominion of sin; a dominion where righteousness can have no place. You are a child and servant of the devil, seeing you are yet in a state of nature, John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." And, to prevent any mistake, consider, that sin and Satan have two sort of servants:

(1.) There are some employed, as it were, in coarser work; those bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness; but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists, not so much as performing the external duties of religion—but living as sons of this world, only attending to earthly things, Php 3:19.

(2.) There are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil's mark in their right hand; which they can and do hide from the eyes of the world. These are secret

hypocrites, who sacrifice as much to the corrupt mind, as the others to the flesh, Ephesians 2:3. These are ruined by a more secret trade of sin—pride, unbelief, self-seeking, and the like, swarm in, and prey upon their corrupted, wholly corrupted souls. Both are servants of the same house; the latter as far as the former from righteousness.

2. How is it possible that you should be able to do any good, you whose nature is wholly corrupt? Can fruit grow where there is no root? or, Can there be an effect without a cause? "Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?" If your nature is wholly corrupt, as indeed it is, all you do is bear fruit according to your nature; for no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause. "Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?" Matthew 7:18.

Ah! what a miserable spectacle is he who can do nothing but sin! You are the man, whoever you are, that are yet in your natural state. Hear, O sinner, what is your case.

(1.) Innumerable sins compass you about; mountains of guilt are lying upon you; floods of impurities overwhelm you, living lusts of all sorts roll up and down in the dead sea of your soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. Your lips are unclean; the opening of your mouth is as the opening of an reeking grave, full of stench and rottenness, Romans 3:13, "Their throat is an open sepulcher." Your natural actions are sin; for "when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?" Zechariah 7:6. Your civil actions are sin, Proverbs 21:4, "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." Your religious actions are sin, Proverbs 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." The thoughts and imaginations of your heart are only evil continually. A deed may be soon done, a word soon spoken, a thought swiftly pass through the heart; but each of these is an item in your accounts. O, sad reckoning! as many thoughts, words, and actions, so many sins. The longer you live your accounts swell the more. Should a tear be dropped for every sin, your head must be waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears; for nothing but sin comes from you. Your heart frames nothing but evil imaginations—there is nothing in your life but what is framed by your heart; and, therefore, there is nothing in your heart or life but evil.

(2.) All your religion, if you have any, is lost labor, as to acceptance with God, or any saving effect on yourself. Are you yet in your natural state? Truly, then, your duties are sins, as was just now hinted. Would not the best wine be loathsome in a vessel wherein there is no pleasure? So is the religion of an unregenerate man. Under the law, the garment which the flesh of the sacrifice was carried in, though it touched other things, did not make them holy—but he who was unclean, touching anything, whether common or sacred, made it unclean. Even so, your duties cannot make your corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves are good; but your corrupt heart defiles them, and makes them unclean, Haggai 2:12-14.

You were accustomed to divide your works into two sorts; some good, some evil—but you must count again, and put them all under one head; for God writes on them all "only evil." This is lamentable—it will be no wonder to see those beg in harvest, who fold their hands, and sleep in seed-time; but to be laboring with others in the spring, and yet have nothing to reap when the harvest comes, is a very sad case, and will be the case of all professors living and dying in their natural state.

(3.) You can not help yourself. What can you do, to take away your sin--you who are wholly corrupt? Nothing, truly but sin. If a natural man begins to relent, drops a tear for his sin, and reform, presently the corrupt nature takes merit itself; he has done much himself, he thinks, and God cannot but do more for him on that account. In the mean time, he does nothing but sin—so that the fitness of the merit is, that the leper be put out of the camp, the dead soul buried out of sight, and the corrupt lump cast into the pit. How can you think to recover yourself by anything which you can do? Will mud and filth wash out filthiness; and will you purge out sin by sinning? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!" Job 14:4. This is the case of your corrupt soul; not to be recovered but by Jesus Christ. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself—but in me is your help," Hosea 13:9. You are poor indeed, extremely "miserable and poor," Revelation 3:17. You have no shelter—but a refuge of lies. You have no garment for your soul—but filthy rags. You have nothing to nourish—but husks which cannot satisfy. And more than this, you did get such a bruise in the loins of Adam, as is not yet cured, so that you are without strength, as well as ungodly, Romans 5:6; unable to do, or work for yourself; nay, more than all this, you can not so much as think aright—but are lying helpless, as an infant exposed in the open field, Ezekiel 16:5.

Use 3. For EXHORTATION. I urge you to believe this sad truth. Alas! it is evident that it is very little believed in the world. Few are concerned to get their corrupt lives changed; but fewer, by far, to get their nature changed. Most men know not what they are, nor what spirits they are of; they are as the eye, which, seeing many things, never sees itself. But until you know the plague of his own heart, there is no hope of your recovery. Why will you not believe it? You have plain Scripture testimony for it; but you are loath to entertain a such an ill opinion of yourselves. Alas! this is the nature of your disease, Revelation 3:17, "You know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Lord, open their eyes to see it, before they die of it, and in hell lift up their eyes, and see what they will not see now.

I shall close this weighty point, of the corruption of man’s nature, with a few words as to another doctrine from the text.

God’s specially noticing our natural corruption.

Doctrine. God takes special notice of our natural corruption, or the sin of our nature. This he testifies two ways:

1. By his WORD, as in the text—"God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually." "The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." Psalms 14:2-3

2. By his WORKS. God marks his particular notice of it, and displeasure with it, as in many of his works, so especially in these two.

(1.) In the death of infants. Many miseries they have been exposed to—they were drowned in the deluge, consumed in Sodom by fire and brimstone; they have been slain with the sword, dashed against the stones, and are still dying ordinary deaths. What is the true cause of this? On what ground does a holy God thus pursue them? Is it the sin of their parents? That may be the occasion of the Lord’s raising the process against them; but it must be their own sin that is the ground of the sentence passing on them—for "the soul that sins, it shall die," says God, Ezekiel 18:4. Is it their

own actual sin? They have none. But as men do with serpents, which they kill at first sight, before they have done any hurt, because of their venomous nature; so it is in this case.

(2.) In the birth of the elect children of God. When the Lord is about to change their nature, he makes the sin of their nature lie heavy on their spirits. When he means to let out their corruption, the lance goes deep into their souls, reaching to the root of sin, Romans 7:7-9. The flesh, or corruption of nature, is pierced, being crucified, as well as the affections and lusts, Galatians 5:24.

USE. Let us, then, have a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature. God sees it—O, that we saw it too, and that sin were ever before us! What avails it to notice other sins, while this mother-sin is not noticed? Turn your eyes inward to the sin of your nature. It is to be feared, that many have this work to begin yet; that they have shut the door, while the grand thief is yet in the house undiscovered. This is a weighty point; and in handling of it, I shall notice these four heads:

I. Men overlooking their natural sin. I shall, for conviction, point at some evidences of men's overlooking the sin of their nature, which yet the Lord takes particular notice of.

1. Men's looking on themselves with such confidence, as if they were in no hazard of gross sins. Many would take it very unkindly to get such a caution as Christ gave his apostles, Luke 21:34, "Take heed of carousing and drunkenness." If any should suppose them to break out in gross abominations, each would be ready to say, "Am I a dog?" It would raise the pride of their hearts—but not their fear and trembling, because they know not the corruption of their nature.

2. Lack of tenderness towards those that fall. Many, in that case, cast off all feelings of Christian compassion, for they do not consider themselves, lest they also be tempted, Galatians 6:1. Men's passions are often highest against the faults of others, when sin sleeps soundly in their own breasts. David, even when he was at his worst, was most violent against the faults of others. While his conscience was asleep under his own guilt, in the matter of Uriah, the Spirit of the Lord takes notice, that his anger was greatly kindled against the man in the parable, 2 Samuel 12:5. And, on good grounds, it is thought it was at the same time that he treated the Ammonites so cruelly, as is related, 2 Samuel 12:31, "Putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln." Grace makes men zealous against sin in others, as well as in themselves—but eyes turned inward to the corruption of nature, clothe them with pity and compassion; and fill them with thankfulness to the Lord, that they themselves were not the people left to be such spectacles of human frailty.

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

4. Delaying of repentance, in hopes to set about it afterwards. Many have their own appointed time for repentance and reformation—as if they were such complete masters over their lusts, that they can allow them to gather more strength, and yet overcome them. They take up resolutions to amend, without an eye to Jesus Christ, union with him, and strength from him; a plain evidence that they are strangers to themselves—so they are left to themselves, and their flourishing resolutions wither; for, as they see not the necessity, so they get not the benefit, of the dew from

heaven to water them.

5. Men’s venturing freely on temptations, and promising relief in their own strength. They cast themselves fearlessly into temptation, in confidence of their coming off fairly—but, were they sensible of the corruption of their nature, they would be cautious of entering on the devil’s ground; as one girt about with bags of gunpowder, would be unwilling to walk where sparks of fire are flying, lest he should be blown up. Self-distrust well befits Christians. "Lord, is it I?" They that know the deceit of their bow, will not be very confident that they shall hit the mark.

6. Ignorance of heart-plagues. The knowledge of the plagues of the heart, is a rare attainment. There are, indeed, some of them written in such great characters, that he who runs may read them—but there are others more subtle, which few discern. How few are there, to whom the bias of the heart to unbelief is a burden? Nay, they perceive it not. Many have had sharp convictions of other sins, that were never to this day convinced of their unbelief; though that is the sin especially aimed at in a thorough conviction, John 16:8-9, "He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." A disposition to establish our own righteousness, is a weed which naturally grows in every man’s heart; but few labor at the plucking of it up—it lurks undiscovered. The bias of the heart to the way of the covenant of works, is a hidden plague of the heart to many. All the difficulty they find is, in getting up their hearts to duties—they find no difficulty in getting their hearts off them, and over them to Jesus Christ. How hard it is to bring men off from their own righteousness! Yes, it is very hard to convince them of their self-righteousness at all.

7. Pride and self-conceit. A view of the corruption of nature would be very humbling, and oblige him who has it, to reckon himself the chief of sinners. Under the greatest attainments and enlargements, it would be ballast to his heart, and hide pride from his eyes. The lack of thorough humiliation, piercing to the sin of one’s nature, is the ruin of many professors—for digging deep makes the great difference between wise and foolish builders, Luke 6:48-49.

II. Original sin to be specially noticed. I will lay before you a few things, in which you should have a special eye to original sin.

1. Have a special eye to it, in your application to Jesus Christ. Do you find any need of Christ, which sends you to him as the Physician of souls? O, forget not your disease when you are with the Physician. They never yet knew well their errand to Christ, who went not to him for the sin of their nature; for his blood to take away the guilt of it, and his Spirit to break the power of it. Though, in the bitterness of your souls, you should lay before him a catalogue of your sins of omission and commission, which might reach from earth to heaven—yet, if original sin were lacking in your confession, assure yourselves that you have forgot the chief part of the errand which a poor sinner has to the Physician of souls. What would it have availed the people of Jericho, to have set before Elisha all the vessels in their city, full of the water that was bad, if they had not led him forth to the spring, to cast in salt there? 2 Kings 2:19-21. The application is easy.

2. Have a special eye to it in your repentance, whether in its beginning or progress; in your first repentance, and in the renewing of your repentance afterwards. Though a man be sick, there is no fear of death, if the sickness strike not to his heart—and there is as little fear of the death of sin, as long as the sin of our nature is not touched. But if you would repent indeed, let the streams lead you up to the fountain; and mourn over your corrupt nature, as the cause of all sin, in heart, lip,

and life, Psalms 51:4-5, "Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

3. Have a special eye upon it in your mortification, Galatians 5:24, "Those who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh." It is the root of bitterness that must be struck at; which the axe of mortification must be laid to, else we labor in vain. In vain do men go about to cleanse the stream, while they are at no pains about the muddy fountain—it is a vain religion to attempt to make the life truly good, while the corruption of nature retains its ancient vigor, and the power of it is not broken.

4. You are to eye it in your daily walk. He who would walk aright must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of his own nature. It is not enough that we look about us, we must also look within us. Where the wall is weakest, there our greatest enemy lies; and there are grounds for daily watching and mourning.

III. WHY original sin is to be especially noticed. I shall offer some reasons, why we should especially notice the sin of our nature.

1. Because of all sins, original sin is the most extensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man, and spoils all. Other sins mar particular parts of the image of God—but this at once defaces the whole. A disease affecting any particular member of the body is dangerous—but that which affects the whole, is worse. The corruption of nature is the poison of the old serpent cast into the fountain of action, which infects every action, and every breathing of the soul.

2. Original sin is the cause of all particular lusts, and actual sins, in our hearts and lives. It is the spawn which the great leviathan has left in the souls of men, from whence comes all the offspring of actual sins and abominations, Mark 7:21, "Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," etc. It is the bitter fountain—particular lusts are but rivulets running from it, which bring forth into the life a part only, and not the whole of what is within. The fountain is always above the stream—and where the water is good, it is best in the fountain; where it is bad, it is worst there. The corruption of nature being that which defiles all, it must needs be the most abominable thing.

3. Original sin is virtually all sin—for it is the seed of all sins, which need but the occasion to set up their heads, being, in the corruption of nature, as the effect in the virtue of its cause. Hence it is called "a body of death," Romans 7:24, as consisting of the several members belonging to such "a body of sins," Colossians 2:11, whose life lies in spiritual death. It is the cursed ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds. As the whole nest of venomous creatures must needs be more dreadful than any few of them that come creeping forth; so the sin of your nature, that mother of abominations, must be worse than any particular lust which appears stirring in your heart and life.

Never did any sin appear in the life of the vilest wretch who ever lived; but look into your own corrupt nature, and there you may see the seed and root that sin--and every other sin. There is atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and whatever is vile--in your heart! Possibly none of these are apparent to you; but there is more in that unfathomable depth of wickedness than you know. Your corrupt heart is like an ant's nest, of which, while the stone lies on it, none of them appear; but take off the stone, and stir them up but with a straw, you will see what a swarm is there--and how lively they are! Just such a sight would your heart afford you, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint He has upon it, and allow Satan to stir it up by temptation!

4. The sin of our nature is, of all sins, the most fixed and abiding. Sinful actions, though the guilt and stain of them may remain—yet in themselves they pass away. The drunkard is not always at his cups, nor the unclean person always acting lewdness—but the corruption of nature is an abiding sin; it remains with men in its full power, by night and by day; at all times fixed, as with bands of iron and brass, until their nature is changed by converting grace; and it remains even with the godly, until the death of the body, though not in its reigning power. Pride, envy, covetousness, and the like, are not always stirring in you—but the proud, envious, carnal nature, is still with you; even as the clock that is wrong is not always striking wrong—but the wrong bent continues with it without intermission.

5. Original sin is the reigning sin, Romans 6:12, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." There are three things which you may observe in the corrupt heart—

(1.) There is in the corrupt nature the corrupt bent of the heart, whereby men are unapt for all good, and fitted for all evil. This the apostle calls here "sin which reigns."

(2.) There are particular lusts, or dispositions of corrupt nature, which the apostle calls "the lusts thereof;" such as pride, covetousness, etc.

(3.) There is one among these, which is, like Saul among the people, higher by far than the rest, namely, "the sin which does so easily beset us," Hebrews 12:1. This we usually call the "predominant sin," because it does, as it were, reign over other particular lusts; so that other lusts must yield to it.

These three are like a river which divides itself into many streams, whereof one is greater than the rest—the corruption of nature is the river head, that has many particular lusts in which it runs; but it chiefly disburdens itself into what is commonly called one’s predominant sin. Now, all of these being fed by the sin of our nature, it is evident that it is the reigning sin, which never loses its superiority over particular lusts, which live and die with it, and by it. But, as in some rivers, the main stream runs not always in one and the same channel, so particular ruling sins may be changed, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age. Now, what does it avail to reform in other things, while the reigning sin remains in its full power? What though some particular lusts are broken? If sin, the sin of our nature, keeps the throne--it will set up another in its stead; as when a water-course is stopped in one place, if the fountain is not closed up, it will stream forth another way. Thus some cast off their prodigality—but covetousness comes up in its stead; some cast away their profanity, and the corruption of nature sends not its main stream that way, as before—but it runs in another channel, namely, in that of a legal disposition, self-righteousness, or the like. So that people are ruined, by their not contemplating the sin of their nature.

6. Original sin is a hereditary evil, Psalms 51:5, "In sin did my mother conceive me." Particular lusts are not so—but in the virtue of their cause. A prodigal father may have a frugal son; but this disease of original sin is necessarily propagated in nature, and therefore hardest to cure. Surely, then, the word should be given out against this sin, as against the king of Israel, 1 Kings 22:31, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with this sin!" For this sin being broken, all other sins are broken with it; and while it stands entire, there is no victory.

IV. How to get a view of the corruption of nature. That you may get a view of the corruption of your nature, I would recommend to you three things:

1. Study to know the spirituality and extent of the law of God, for that is the mirror wherein you may see yourselves.

2. Observe your hearts at all times—but especially under temptation. Temptation is the fire which brings up the scum of the vile heart. Carefully mark the first risings of corruption.

3. Go to God, through Jesus Christ, for illumination by his Spirit. Lay out your soul before the Lord, as willing to know the vileness of your nature—say unto him, "That which I know not--teach me." And be willing to take light in from the word. Believe, and you shall see. It is by the word that the Spirit teaches; but without the Spirit's teaching, all other teaching will be to little purpose. Though the gospel were to shine about you like the sun at noon-day, and this great truth were ever so plainly preached, you would never see yourselves aright, until the Spirit of the Lord lights his candle within your bosom! The fullness and glory of Christ, and the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned—but where the Spirit of Christ is the teacher. To shut up this weighty point, let the consideration of what has been said, commend Christ to you all. You who are brought out of your natural state of corruption, unto Christ, be humble; still come to Christ, and improve your union with him, to the further weakening of your natural corruption. Is your nature changed? It is but in part so. If you are cured, remember the cure is not yet perfected, you still go halting. Though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you are by nature should keep you humble.

You who are yet in your natural state, take this with you—believe the corruption of your nature; and let Christ and his grace be precious in your eyes. O, that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls! What do you intend to do? You must die; you must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not—for, before another day, you may be summoned before God's dread tribunal, in the grave-clothes of your corrupt state; and your vile souls be cast into the pit of destruction, as a corrupt lump, to be forever buried out of God's sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven, for you, in your natural state—there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord! If the brittle thread of your life, which may break with a touch before you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined forever, without remedy! Come speedily to Jesus Christ—he has cleansed souls as vile as yours! "Their bloodguilt, which I have not pardoned, I will pardon!" Joel 3:21 Thus far of the sinfulness of man's natural state.

Chapter 9

01.02b1 2. The MISERY of man's natural state

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) I. The State of INNOCENCE II. The State of NATURE 1. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state 2. The MISERY of man’s natural state "We were by nature the children of wrath,

even as others." Ephesians 2:3

Having shown you the sinfulness of man’s natural state, I come now to lay before you the misery of it. A sinful state cannot but be a miserable state. If sin goes before, wrath follows of course. Corruption and destruction are so knit together, that the Holy Spirit calls destruction, even eternal destruction, "corruption," Galatians 6:8, "He who sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption," that is, everlasting destruction; as is clear from its being opposed to life everlasting, in the following clause. The apostle, having shown the Ephesians their real state by nature, namely, that they were dead in sins and trespasses, altogether corrupt; he tells them, in the words of the text, their relative state, namely, that the pit was dug for them, while in that state of corruption—being dead in sins, they "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." In the words we have four things:

1. The MISERY of a natural state; it is a state of wrath, as well as a state of sin. "We were," says the apostle, "children of wrath," bound over and liable to the wrath of God; under wrath in some measure; and, in wrath, bound over to more, even the full measure of it, in hell, where the floods of it go over the prisoners forever. Thus Saul, in his wrath, adjudging David to die 1 Samuel 20:31; and David, in his wrath, passing sentence of death against the man in the parable, 2 Samuel 12:5, says, each of them, of his supposed criminal, "He shall surely die;" or, as the words in the original language are, "He is a son of death." So the natural man is "a child of wrath, a son of death." He is a malefactor, dead in law, lying in chains of guilt; a criminal, held fast in his fetters, until the day of execution; which will not fail to come, unless a pardon be obtained from his God, who is his judge and his opponent too. By that means, indeed, children of wrath may become children or the kingdom. The phrase in the text, however common in the holy language, is very significant. And as it is evident that the apostle, calling natural men the "children of disobedience," Ephesians 2:2, means more than that they were disobedient children; for such may the Lord’s own children be—no, to be children of wrath, is more than simply to be liable to, or under wrath. Jesus Christ was liable to, and under wrath; but I doubt whether we have any warrant to say he was a child of wrath. The phrase seems to intimate, that men are, whatever they are in their natural state, under the wrath of God; that they are wholly under wrath—wrath is, as it were, woven into their very nature, and mixes itself with the whole of the man, who is, if I may so speak, a very lump of wrath, a child of hell, as the iron in the fire is all fire. For men naturally are children of wrath; they come forth, so to speak, out of the womb of wrath—as Jonah’s gourd was the "son of a night," which we render, "came up in a night," Jonah 4:10; as if it had come out of the womb of the night, as we read of the "womb of the morning," Psalms 110:3. Thus sparks of fire are called "sons of the burning coal," Job 5:7, Isaiah 21:10, "O my thrashing, and the corn" or son "of my floor," thrashed in the

floor of wrath, and, as it were, brought forth by it. Thus the natural man is a "child of wrath;" it "entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil," Psalms 109:18. For, though Judas was the only son of perdition among the apostles; yet all men, by nature, are of the same family.

2. Here is the ORIGIN of this misery; men have it by nature. They owe it to their nature, as vitiated and corrupted by the fall; to the wicked quality, or corruption of their nature, as before noticed, which is their principle of action, and, ceasing from action, the only principle in an unregenerate state. Now, by this nature, men are children of wrath; as, in time of pestilential infection, one draws in death with the disease then raging. Therefore seeing, from our first being as children of Adam, we are corrupt children, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, we are also from that moment children or wrath.

3. The UNIVERSALITY of this misery. All are by nature children of wrath—"we," says the apostle, "even as others;" Jews as well as Gentiles. Those who are now, by grace, the children of God were, by nature, in no better case than those who are still in their natural state.

4. Here is a glorious and happy CHANGE intimated—we were children of wrath—but are not so now; grace has brought us out of that state. This the apostle says of himself, and other believers. And thus, it well becomes the people of God to be often standing on the shore, and looking back to the Red Sea, or the state of wrath, which they were once weltering in, even as others.

DOCTRINE. The state of nature is a state of wrath. Everyone, in a natural unregenerate state, is in a state of wrath. We are born children of wrath; and continue so, until we be born again. Nay, as soon as we are children of Adam, we are children of wrath.

I shall introduce what I am to say on this point, with a few observations, as to the universality of this state of wrath, which may serve to prepare the way for the word into your consciences.

Wrath has gone as wide as ever sin went. When angels sinned, the wrath of God broke in upon them like a flood. "God spared not the angels who sinned—but cast them down to hell," 2 Peter 2:4. It was thereby demonstrated, that no natural excellence in the creature can shield it from the wrath of God, if it once becomes a sinful creature. The finest and nicest piece of the workmanship of heaven, if once the Creator’s image upon it be defaced by sin, God can and will dash in pieces in his wrath, unless satisfaction be made to justice, and that image be restored; neither of which the sinner himself can do. Adam sinned; and the whole lump of mankind was leavened, and bound over to the fire of God’s wrath. From the text you may learn,

1. That ignorance of this state, cannot free men from it. The Gentiles, that know not God, "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." A man’s house may be on fire, his wife and children perishing in the flames, while he knows nothing of it; and therefore is not concerned about it. Such is your case, O you who are ignorant of these things! Wrath is silently sinking into your souls while you are blessing yourselves, saying, "We shall have peace." You need not a more certain token that you are children of wrath, than that you never saw yourselves such. You cannot be the children of God, who never yet saw yourselves the children of the devil. You cannot be in the way to heaven, who never saw yourselves by nature in the high road to hell. You are grossly ignorant of your state by nature; and so ignorant of God and of Christ, and your need of him—and though you look on your ignorance as a covert from wrath—yet take it out of the mouth of God himself, that it will ruin you if it be not removed; Isaiah 27:11, "For this is a people without understanding;

so their Maker has no compassion on them, and their Creator shows them no favor." See also 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hosea 4:6.

2. No outward privileges can exempt men from this state of wrath, for the Jews, the children of the kingdom, God's peculiar people, were "children of wrath, even as others." Though you be church members, partakers of all church privileges; though you be descended of godly parents, of great and honorable families; be what you will, you are by nature heirs of hell, children of wrath.

3. No profession, no attainments in a profession of religion, do or can exempt men from this state of wrath. Paul was one of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, Acts 26:5; yet a child of wrath, even as others, until he was converted. The religious hypocrite, and the profane, are alike as to their state, however different their conversation be; and they will be alike in their fatal end, Psalms 125:5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

4. Young ones, who are but setting out in the world, have nothing to do to make themselves children of wrath, by following the graceless multitude—they are children of wrath by nature; so it is done already. They were born heirs of hell; and they will indeed make themselves more so, if they do not, while they are young, flee from that wrath to which they are born, by fleeing to Jesus Christ.

5. Whatever men are now by grace, they were even as others by nature. This may be a sad meditation to those who have been at ease from their youth, and have had no changes.

Now these things being premised, I shall, in the first place, show what this state of wrath is; secondly, confirm the doctrine; and, thirdly, apply it.

I. I am to show WHAT the state of wrath is. But who can fully describe the wrath of an angry God? None can do it. Yet so much of it may be discovered, as may serve to convince men of the absolute necessity of fleeing to Jesus Christ, out of that state of wrath. Anger, in men, is a passion and commotion of the spirit, for an injury received; with a desire to resent the same. When it comes to a height, and is fixed in one's spirit, it is called wrath. Now there are no passions in God, properly speaking; they are inconsistent with his absolute unchangeableness, and independency—therefore, Paul and Barnabas, to remove the mistake of the Lycaonians, who thought they were gods, tell them, "they were men of like passions with themselves," Acts 14:15. Wrath, when it is attributed to God, must not be considered in respect of the passion of wrath—but the effects thereof. Wrath is a fire in the affections of men; tormenting the man himself—but there is no perturbation in God. His wrath does not in the least mar that infinite repose and happiness which he has in himself. It is a most pure and undisturbed act of his will, producing dreadful effects against the sinner. It is little that we know of the infinite God; but, condescending to our weakness, he is pleased to speak of himself to us after the manner of men. Let us therefore notice man's wrath—but remove everything in our consideration of the wrath of God, that implies imperfection; and so we may attain to some view of it, however scanty. By this means we are led to consider the wrath of God against the natural man in these three particulars.

1. There is wrath in the HEART of God against him. The Lord approves him not—but is displeased with him. Every natural man lies under the displeasure of God; and that is heavier than mountains of brass. Although he be pleased with himself, and others be pleased with him too—yet God looks

down on him displeased.

(1.) His person is under God's displeasure; "You hate all workers of iniquity," Psalms 5:5. A godly man's sin is displeasing to God—yet his person is still "accepted in the Beloved," Ephesians 1:6. But "God is angry with the wicked every day," Psalms 7:11. There is a fire of wrath which burns continually against him in the heart of God. They are as dogs and swine—most abominable creatures in the sight of God. Though their natural state be gilded over with a shining profession—yet they are abhorred of God; and are to him as smoke in his nose, Isaiah 65:5, and lukewarm water, to be spewed out of his mouth, Revelation 3:16; whited sepulchers, Matthew 23:27; a generation of vipers, Matthew 12:34; and a people of his wrath, Isaiah 10:6.

(2.) He is displeased with all they do—it is impossible for them to please him, being unbelievers, Hebrews 11:6. He hates their persons; and so has no pleasure in—but is displeased with their best works, Isaiah 66:3, "he who sacrifices a lamb, is as if he cut off a dog's neck," etc. Their duty as done by them, is "an abomination to the Lord," Proverbs 15:8. And as men turn their back on those with whom they are angry, so when the Lord refuses communion with the natural man in his duties, it is a plain indication of his wrath.

2. There is wrath in the WORD of God against him. When wrath is in the heart, it seeks a vent by the lips—so God fights against the natural man with the sword of his mouth, Revelation 2:16. The Lord's word never speaks good of him—but always curses and condemns him. Hence it is, that when he is awakened, the word read or preached often increases his horror. It condemns all his actions, together with his corrupt nature. There is nothing he does—but the law declares it to be sin. It is a rule of perfect obedience, from which he always, in all things, declines; and so it rejects everything he does, as sinful. It pronounces his doom, and denounces God's curse against him, Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse—for it is written, Cursed in everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." However well he may be in the world, it pronounces a woe from heaven against him, Isaiah 3:11. The Bible is a quiver filled with arrows of wrath against him, ready to be poured in on his soul. God's threatenings, in his word, hang over his head as a black cloud, ready to shower down on him every moment. The word is, indeed, the saint's security against wrath—but it binds the natural man's sin and wrath together, as a certain pledge of his ruin, if he continues in that state. So the conscience being awakened, and perceiving this tie made by the law, the man is filled with terrors in his soul.

3. There is wrath in the HAND of God against the natural man. He is under heavy strokes of wrath already, and is liable to more.

(1.) There is wrath on his BODY. It is a piece of cursed clay, which wrath is sinking into by virtue of the threatening of the first covenant, Genesis 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." There is not a disease or pain that affects him—but it comes on him with the sting of God's indignation in it. They are all cords of death, sent before to bind the prisoner.

(2.) There is wrath upon his SOUL.

[1.] He can have no communion with God; he is "foolish, and shall not stand in God's sight," Psalms 5:5. When Adam sinned, God turned him out of paradise—and natural men are, as Adam left them, banished from the gracious presence of the Lord; and can have no access to him in that

state. There is war between heaven and them; and so all commerce is cut off. "They are without God in the world," Ephesians 2:12. The sun is gone down on them, and there is not the least glimpse of favor towards them from heaven.

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

[3.] They lie open to fearful additional plagues on their souls, even in this life. Sometimes they meet with deadening strokes, silent blows from the hand of an angry God; arrows of wrath, that enter into their souls without noise. Isaiah 6:10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes," etc. God strives with them for a while, and convictions enter their consciences; but they rebel against the light—and by a secret judgment they receive a blow on the head; so that, from that time, they do as it were live and rot above ground. Their hearts are deadened; their affections withered; their consciences stupefied; and their whole souls blasted; "cast forth as a branch, and withered," John 15:6. They are plagued with judicial blindness. They shut their eyes against the light; and they are given over to the devil, the god of this world, to be blinded more, 2 Corinthians 4:4. Yes, "God sends them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie," 2 Thessalonians 2:11. Even conscience, like a false light on the shore, leads them upon rocks—by which they are broken in pieces.

They harden themselves against God, and he leaves them to Satan and their own hearts, whereby they are hardened more and more. They are often given up unto "vile affections," Romans 1:26. They are left to run into all excess, as their furious lusts drive them. Sometimes they meet with sharp fiery strokes, whereby their souls become like mount Sinai, where nothing is seen but fire and smoke; nothing heard but the thunder of God's wrath, and the voice of the trumpet of a broken law, waxing louder and louder—which makes them, like Pashur, Jeremiah 20:4, "a terror to themselves." God takes the filthy garments of their sins, which they were accustomed to sleep in securely, overlays them with brimstone, and sets them on fire about their ears—so they have a hell within them.

(3.) There is wrath on the natural man's enjoyments. Whatever is lacking in his house, there is one thing that is never lacking there, Proverbs 3:33, "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked." Wrath is on all that he has, on the bread that he eats, the water he drinks, the clothes which he wears. "His basket and kneading bowl are cursed," Deuteronomy 28:17. Some things fall wrong with him; and that comes to pass by virtue of this wrath—other things go according to his wish, and there is wrath in that too; for it is a snare to his soul, Proverbs 1:32, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." This wrath turns his blessings into curses, Malachi 2:2, "I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them." The holy law is "a killing letter to him," 2 Corinthians 3:6. The ministry of the gospel "a savor of death unto death," 2 Corinthians 2:16. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "he eats and drinks damnation to himself," 1 Corinthians 11:29. Nay, more than all that, Christ himself is to him a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," 1 Peter 2:8. Thus

wrath follows the natural man, as his shadow does his body. "The plowing of the wicked, is sin." Proverbs 21:4

(4.) He is under the power of Satan, Acts 24:18. The devil has overcome him, so he is his by conquest, his lawful captive, Isaiah 49:24. The natural man is condemned already, John 3:18, and therefore under the heavy hand of "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil." He keeps his prisoners in the prison of a natural state, bound hand and foot, Isaiah 61:1, laden with various lusts, as chains with which he holds them fast. You need not, as many do, call on the devil to capture you; for he has a fast hold of you already, as a child of wrath. "Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." 2 Timothy 2:26

(5.) The natural man has no security for a moment's safety, from the wrath of God coming on him to the uttermost. The curse of the law, denounced against him, has already tied him to the stake—so that the arrows of justice may pierce his soul; and, in him, may meet all the miseries and plagues which flow from the avenging wrath of God. See how he is set as a mark to the arrows of wrath, Psalms 7:11-13, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he does not repent, God will sharpen His sword; He has strung His bow and made it ready. He has prepared His deadly weapons; He tips His arrows with fire." Does he lie down to sleep? There is not a promise that he knows of, or can know, to secure him that he shall not be in hell before he awakens. Justice pursues, and cries for vengeance on the sinner; the law casts the fire-balls of its curses continually upon him. The abused and long-tired patience of God, is that which sustains his life. He walks amidst enemies armed against him—his name may rightly be called Magor-missabib, that is, terror round about, Jeremiah 20:3. Angels, devils, men, beasts, stones, heaven and earth, are in readiness, on a word of command from the Lord—to put him to death.

Thus the natural man lives—but he must die too; and DEATH is a dreadful messenger to him. It comes upon him armed with wrath, and puts three sad charges in his hand.

(1.) Death charges him to bid an eternal farewell to all things in this world; to leave it, and haste away to another world. Ah, what a dreadful charge must this be to a child of wrath! He can have no comfort from heaven, for God is his enemy—as for the things of the world, and the enjoyment of his lusts, which were the only springs of his comfort, these are in a moment dried up to him forever. He is not ready for another world—he was not thinking of dying so soon; or, if he was—yet he has no portion secured to him in the other world—but that which he was born to, and was increasing all his days, namely, a treasury of wrath. But go he must; his clay-god, the world, must be parted with, and what more does he have? There was never a glimmering of light, or favor from heaven, to his soul—the wrath which hung in the threatening, as a cloud like a man's hand, is darkening the whole heaven above him; if he "looks unto the earth," from whence all his light was accustomed to come, "behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and he shall be driven to darkness," Isaiah 8:22.

(2.) Death charges soul and body to part, until the great day of judgment. His soul is required of him, "You fool! This very night your soul will be demanded from you." Luke 12:20. O, what a miserable parting must this be to a child of wrath! Care was indeed taken to provide for the body things necessary for this life; but, alas! there is nothing laid up for another life, nothing to be a seed of a glorious resurrection—as it lived, so it must die, and rise again—sinful flesh, fuel for the fire of

God’s wrath! As for the soul, he was never solicitous to provide for it. It lay in the body, dead to God, and all holy things; and so must be carried out into the pit, in the grave-clothes of its natural state—for now that death comes, the companions in sin must part.

(3.) Death charges the soul to appear before the tribunal of God, while the body lies to be carried to the grave, Ecclesiastes 12:7, "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto all men once to die—but after this the judgment." Well were it for the sinful soul, if it might be buried together with the body. But that cannot be; it must go, and receive its sentence; and shall be shut up in the prison of hell—while the cursed body lies imprisoned in the grave, until the day of the general judgment. When the end of the world, as appointed by God, is come, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead arise. Then shall the weary earth, at the command of the Judge, cast forth the bodies, the cursed bodies, of those who lived and died in their natural state. "The sea, death, and hell, shall deliver up their dead," Revelation 20:13. Their miserable bodies and souls shall be reunited, and they summoned before the tribunal of Christ. Then shall they receive that fearful sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41. Whereupon "they shall go away into everlasting punishment," Matthew 25:46. They shall be eternally shut up in hell, never to get the least drop of comfort, nor the smallest alleviation of their torment!

There they will be punished with the punishment of loss, being excommunicated forever from the presence of God, his angels, and saints. All means of grace, all hopes of a delivery, will be forever cut off from their eyes. They shall not have a drop of water to cool their tongues, Luke 16:24-25. They will be punished with a punishment of sense. They must not only depart from God—but depart into fire; into everlasting fire! There the worm which shall gnaw them will never die; the fire which will scorch them, shall never be quenched. God will, through eternity, hold them up with the one hand, and pour the full vials of wrath into them with the other!

"The wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36. This is that state of wrath natural men live in; being under much of the wrath of God, and liable to more. But, for a farther view of it, let us consider the QUALITIES of this wrath:

1. The wrath of God is IRRESISTIBLE, there is no standing before it; "Who can stand in your sight, when once You are angry?" Psalms 76:7. Can the worm or the moth defend itself against him who designs to crush it? Can the worm, man, stand before an angry God? Foolish man, indeed, practically bids a defiance to Heaven; but the Lord often, even in this world, opens such sluices of wrath upon them, as all their might cannot stop—they are carried away thereby, as with a flood! How much more will it be so in hell!

2. The wrath of God is INSUPPORTABLE. What a man cannot resist, he will try to endure—but who shall dwell in devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? God’s wrath is a weight that will sink men into the lowest hell. It is a burden which no man can stand under.

3. The wrath of God is UNAVOIDABLE to such as continue impenitently, and die in their sinful course. "He who, being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Proverbs 29:1. We may now flee from it, indeed, by fleeing to Jesus Christ. But such as flee from Christ, will never be able to avoid it. Where can men flee from the avenging God? Where will they find a shelter? The hills will not bear them. The mountains will be deaf to

their loudest supplications, when they cry to them to "hide them from the wrath of the Lamb."

4. The wrath of God is POWERFUL and FIERCE wrath, Psalms 90:11, "Who can comprehend the power of Your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear You deserve." We are apt to fear the wrath of man more than we ought; but no man can apprehend the wrath of God to be more dreadful than it really is. The power of God's wrath can never be known to the utmost; for it is infinite, and, properly speaking, has no utmost limit. However fierce it is, either on earth or in hell, God can still carry it farther. Everything in God is most perfect in its kind; and therefore no wrath is so fierce as his. O sinner! how will you be able to endure that wrath, which will tear you in pieces, Psalms 50:22, and grind you to powder! Luke 20:18. The history of the two bears, which came out of the woods and mauled forty-two boys, is an awful one, 2 Kings 2:23-24. But the united force of the rage of lions, leopards, and bears bereaved of their cubs, is not sufficient to give us even a faint view of the power of the wrath of God; Hosea 13:7-8, "So now I will attack you like a lion, or like a leopard that lurks along the road. I will rip you to pieces like a bear whose cubs have been taken away. I will tear you apart and devour you like a hungry lion!"

5. The wrath of God is PENETRATING and PIERCING wrath. It is burning wrath, and fiery indignation. There is no pain more intense than that which is caused by fire; and no fire so piercing as the fire of God's indignation, which burns unto the lowest hell, Deuteronomy 32:22. The arrows of men's wrath can pierce flesh, blood, and bones—but cannot reach the soul; but the wrath of God will sink into the soul, and so pierce a man in the most tender part. Like as, when a person is thunderstruck, oft-times there is not a wound to be seen in the skin; yet life is gone, and the bones are melted, as it were—so God's wrath can penetrate into, and melt a man's soul within him, when his earthly comforts stand about him entire and untouched; as in Belshazzar's case, Daniel 5:6.

6. The wrath of God is CONSTANT wrath, running parallel with the man's continuance in an unregenerate state; constantly attending him from the womb to the grave. There are few days so dark—but the sun sometimes looks out from under the clouds. But the wrath of God is an abiding cloud on the objects of it; John 3:36, "The wrath of God abides on him" who believes not.

7. The wrath of God is ETERNAL. O, miserable soul! if you flee not from this wrath unto Jesus Christ; though your misery had a beginning—yet it will never have an end! Should devouring death wholly swallow you up, and forever hold you fast in the grave, it would be kind—but your body must be reunited to your immortal soul, and live again, and never die; that you may be ever dying, in the hands of the living God. Death will quench the flame of man's wrath against us, if nothing else does. But God's wrath, when it has come on the sinner for millions of ages, will still be the wrath to come, Matthew 3:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; as the water of a river is still coming, however much has passed. While God is, He will pursue the quarrel.

8. However dreadful it is, and though it be eternal—yet it is most JUST wrath! It is a clear fire, without the least smoke of injustice. The sea of wrath, raging with greatest fury against the sinner, is clear as crystal. The Judge of all the earth can do no wrong—He knows no passion, for they are inconsistent with the perfection of his nature. "Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath? Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world?" Romans 3:5-6.

II. I shall CONFIRM the doctrine of the state of wrath. Consider,

1. How decided the threatening of the first covenant is. "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die," Genesis 2:17. Hereby sin and punishment being connected, the veracity of God makes the execution of the threatening certain. Now, all men being by nature under this covenant, the breach of it lays them under the curse.

2. The justice of God requires that a child of sin be a child of wrath; that the law being broken, the sanction thereof should take place. God, as man's ruler and judge, cannot but do right, Genesis 18:25. Now, it is "a righteous thing with God to recompense sin" with wrath, 2 Thessalonians 1:6. He "is of purer eyes than to behold evil," Habakkuk 1:13. And "he hates all the workers of iniquity," Psalms 5:5.

3. The horrors of a natural conscience prove this. Conscience, in the breasts of men, tells them that they are sinners, and therefore liable to the wrath of God. Let men, at any time, soberly commune with themselves, and they will find that they have the witness in themselves, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," Romans 1:32.

4. The pangs of the new birth, the work of the Spirit on elect souls, in order to their conversion, demonstrate this. Hereby their natural sinfulness and misery, as liable to the wrath of God, are plainly taught them, filling their hearts with fear of that wrath. As it is the Spirit's work to "convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment," John 16:8, this testimony must needs be true; for the Spirit of truth cannot witness an untruth. But true believers, being freed from the state of wrath, "receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear—but receive the Spirit of adoption," Romans 8:15. Therefore, if fears of that nature do arise, after the soul's union with Christ, they come from the saint's own spirit, or from a worse.

5. The sufferings of Christ plainly prove this doctrine. Why was the Son of God a son under wrath—but because the children of men were children of wrath? He suffered the wrath of God; not for himself—but for those who were liable to it in their own persons. Nay, this not only shows us to have been liable to wrath—but also that wrath must have a vent, in the punishment of sin. If this was done in the green tree, what will become of the dry? What a miserable case must a sinner be in, who is out of Christ; that is not vitally united to Christ, and partakes not of his Spirit! God, who spared not his own Son, surely will not spare such a one! But the unregenerate man, who has no great value for the honor of God, will be apt to rise up against this Judge, and in his own heart condemn his procedure. Nevertheless, the Judge being infinitely just—the sentence must be righteous. Therefore, to stop your mouth, O proud sinner! and to still your clamor against your righteous Judge, consider,

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

2. You have not only enmity against God in your nature—but have revealed it by actual sins, which are, in his eye, acts of hostility. You have brought forth your lusts into the field of battle against your sovereign Lord. And because you are such a criminal, your condemnation is just—for,

besides the sin of your nature, you have done that against Heaven, which if you had done against men, you must have suffered the penalty for it; and shall not wrath from Heaven overtake you?

(1.) You are guilty of high treason and rebellion against the King of heaven. The thought and wish of your heart, which he knows as well as the language of your mouth, has been, "No God," Psalms 14:1. You have rejected his government, blown the trumpet, and set up the standard of rebellion against him, being one of those that say, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" Luke 19:14. You have striven against, and quenched his Spirit; practically disowned his laws proclaimed by his messengers; stopped your ears at their voice, and sent them away mourning for your pride. You have conspired with his grand enemy, the devil. Although you are a servant of the King of glory, daily receiving of his favors, and living on his bounty, you are holding a correspondence, and have contracted a friendship, with his greatest enemy, and are acting for him against your Lord; for "the lusts of the devil you will do," John 8:44.

(2.) You are a murderer before the Lord. You have laid the stumbling-block of your iniquity before the blind world, and have ruined the souls of others by your sinful course. Though you do not see now, the time may come when you shall see the blood of your relations, neighbors, acquaintances, and others upon your head, Matthew 18:7, "Woe unto the world because of offences. Woe to that man by whom the offence comes." Yes, you are a self-murderer before God; Proverbs 8:36, "He who sins against me, wrongs his own soul—all they that hate me, love death." Ezekiel 18:31, "Why will you die?" The laws of men mark the self-murderer; what wonder is it, that the law of God is so severe against soul-murderers? Is it unjust, that those who depart from God now, cost what it will, should be forced to depart from him at last, into everlasting fire? But, what is yet more criminal, you are guilty of the murder of the Son of God; for the Lord will reckon you among those that pierced him, Revelation 1:6. You have rejected him, as the Jews did; and by rejecting him, you have justified their deed. They, indeed, did not acknowledge him to be the Son of God—but you do. What they did against him, was in his state of humiliation; but you have acted against him, in his state of exaltation. These things will aggravate your condemnation. What wonder, then, if the voice of the lamb change to the roaring of the lion, against the traitor and murderer!

OBJECTION. But some will say, "Is there not a vast disproportion between our sin, and that wrath you talk of?"

I answer, "No! God punishes no more than the sinner deserves." To rectify your mistake in this matter, consider,

1. The vast rewards which God has annexed to obedience. His word is no more full of fiery wrath against sin, than it is of gracious rewards to the obedience it requires. If heaven be in the promises, it is altogether equal that hell is in the threatenings. If death were not in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness, where would be the proportion? Moreover, sin deserves the misery—but our best works do not deserve the happiness—yet both are set before us; sin and misery, holiness and happiness. What reason is there, then, to complain?

2. However severe the threatenings be—yet all have enough to do to reach the end of the law. "Fear him," says our Lord, "who after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear him," Luke 12:5. This bespeaks our dread of divine power and majesty; yet how few fear him indeed! The Lord knows the hearts of sinners to be exceedingly intent upon fulfilling their lusts;

they cleave so fondly to their beloved sins, that a small force does not suffice to draw them away from them. Those who travel through deserts, where they are in hazard from wild beasts, have need to carry fire along with them—so a holy law must be fenced with dreadful wrath in a world lying in wickedness. But who are those who complain of that wrath as too great—but those to whom it is too little to draw them off from their sinful courses? It was the man who pretended to fear his Lord, because he was an austere man, who kept his money laid up in a napkin; and so he was condemned out of his own mouth, Luke 19:20-22. You are that man, even you whose objection I am answering. How can the wrath which you are under, and liable to, be too great, when as yet it is not sufficient to awaken you to flee from it? Is it time to relax the penalties of the law, when men are trampling the commands of it under foot?

3. Consider how God dealt with his own Son, whom he spared not, Romans 8:32. The wrath of God seized on his soul and body both, and brought him into the dust of death. That his sufferings were not eternal, flowed from the quality of the Sufferer, who was infinite; and therefore able to bear at once the whole load of wrath; and, upon that account, his sufferings were infinite in value. But as the sufferings of a mere creature cannot be infinite in value, they must be protracted to an eternity. And what confidence can a rebel subject, have to quarrel with his part of a punishment executed on the King's Son?

4. The sinner does against God all that he can—"Behold, you have done evil things as you could," Jeremiah 3:5. That you have not done more, and worse, thanks to him who restrained you; to the chain by which the wolf was kept in, not to yourself. No wonder that God shows his power on the sinner, who puts forth his power against God, as far as it will reach. The unregenerate man puts no period to his sinful course; and would put no bounds to it either, if he were not restrained by divine power, for wise ends—therefore, it is just that he be forever under wrath.

5. It is infinite majesty which sin strikes against; and so it is, in some sort, an infinite evil. Sin rises in its demerit, according to the quality of the party offended. If a man wound his neighbor, his goods must pay for it; but if he wound his prince, his life must pay for that. The infinity of God makes infinite wrath the just demerit of sin. God is infinitely displeased with sin; and when he acts, he must act like himself, and show his displeasure by proportionable means.

6. Those who shall lie forever under this wrath will be eternally sinning, and therefore must eternally suffer; not only in respect of divine judicial procedure—but because sin is its own punishment, in the same manner as holy obedience is its own reward.

III. I now proceed to APPLY this doctrine of the misery of man's natural state.

Use 1. Of INFORMATION. Is our state by nature a state of wrath? Then,

1. Surely we are not born innocent. Those chains of wrath, which by nature are upon us, show us to be born criminals. The swaddling-bands, wherewith infants are bound hand and foot as soon as they are born, may put us in mind of the cords of wrath, with which they are held prisoners, as children of wrath.

2. What desperate madness is it, for sinners to go on in their sinful course! What is it but to heap coals of fire on your own head! To lay more and more fuel to the fire of wrath! To "treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath!" Romans 2:5. You may perish, "when his wrath is kindled

but a little," Psalms 2:12. Why will you increase it yet more? You are already bound with such cords of death, as cannot easily be loosened; what need is there of more? Stand, careless sinner, and consider this.

3. You have no reason to complain, as long as you are out of hell. "Why does a living man complain?" Lamentations 3:39. If one, who has forfeited his life, is banished from his native country, and exposed to many hardships, he may well bear all patiently, seeing his life is spared. Do you murmur, because you are under pain and sickness? Nay, bless God, you are not there where the worm never dies! Do you grudge, that you are not in so good a condition in the world as some of your neighbors are? Be thankful, rather, that you are not in the condition of the damned! Is your substance gone from you? Wonder that the fire of God's wrath has not consumed you! Kiss the rod, O sinner! and acknowledge mercy; for God "punishes us less than our iniquities deserve," Ezra 9:13.

4. Here is a memorandum, both for poor and rich.

(1.) The POOREST, who go from door to door, and have not one penny left them by their parents, were born to an inheritance. Their first father Adam left them "children of wrath:" and, continuing in their natural state, they cannot escape it; for "this is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God," Job 20:29. An heritage that will furnish them with a habitation, who have no where to lay their head; they shall be "cast into outer darkness," Matthew 25:30, for to them "is reserved the blackness of darkness forever," Jude 1:13, where their bed shall be sorrow; "they shall lie down in sorrow," Isaiah 50:11; their food shall be judgment, for God will "feed them with judgment," Ezekiel 34:16; and their drink shall be the red wine of God's wrath, "the dregs whereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them," Psalms 75:8.

I know that those who are destitute of worldly goods, and also void of the knowledge and grace of God, who therefore may be called the devil's poor, will be apt to say, "We hope God will make us suffer all our misery in this world, and that we shall be happy in the next world;" as if their miserable outward condition, in time, would secure their happiness in eternity. A gross and fatal mistake! there is another inheritance which they have, namely, "Lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit," Jeremiah 16:19. But, "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies," Isaiah 28:17. Do you think, O sinner, that God, who commands judges on earth "not to respect the person of the poor in judgment," Leviticus 19:15, will pervert judgment for you? No! Know for certain, that however miserable you are here, you shall be eternally miserable hereafter, if you live and die in your natural state.

(2.) Many that have plenty in the world, have far more than they know of. You have, it may be, O unregenerate man! an estate, a good portion, a large stock, left you by your father; you have improved it, and the sun of prosperity shines upon you; so that you can say, with Esau, Genesis 33:9, "I have enough." But know, you have more than all that, an inheritance which you do not think of—you are a child of wrath, an heir of hell! That is a heritage which will abide with you amidst all the changes in the world, as long as you continue in an unregenerate state. When you shall leave your substance to others, this will go along with you into another world. It is no wonder a slaughter ox is fed to the full, and is not set to work as others are, Job 21:30, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath."

Well then, "Rejoice, let your heart cheer you, walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes." Live above reproofs and warning from the word of God; show yourself a man of learning, by casting off all fear of God; mock at seriousness; live like yourself, "a child of wrath," "an heir of hell." "But know, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment!" Ecclesiastes 11:9. Assure yourself, your "breaking shall come suddenly at an instant," Isaiah 30:13. "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool," Ecclesiastes 7:6. The fair blaze, and the great noise which they make, are quickly gone—so shall your mirth be. Then that wrath, which is now silently sinking into your soul, shall make a fearful hissing.

5. Woe to him, that like Moab, "has been at ease from his youth, Jeremiah 48:11, and never saw the black cloud of wrath hanging over his head. There are many who "have no changes, therefore they fear not God," Psalms 55:19. They have lived in a good hope, as they call it, all their days; that is, they never had power to believe an ill report of their soul's state. Many have come by their religion too easily—and as it came lightly to them, so it will go from them, when the trial comes. Do you think men flee from wrath in a morning dream? Or will they flee from the wrath which they never saw pursuing them?

6. Think it not strange, if you see one in great distress about his soul's condition, who was accustomed to be as jovial, and as little concerned for salvation as any of his neighbors. Can one get a right view of himself, as in a state of wrath, and not be pierced with sorrows, terrors, and anxiety? When a weight quite above a man's strength, lies upon him, and he is alone, he can neither stir hand nor foot; but when one comes to lift it off him, he will struggle to get from under it. Thunderclaps of wrath from the word of God, conveyed to the soul by the Spirit of the Lord, will surely keep a man awake.

7. It is no wonder that wrath comes upon churches and nations, and upon us in this land, and that infants and children smart under it. Most of the society are yet children of wrath; few are fleeing from it, or taking the way to prevent it—but people of all ranks are helping it on. The Jews rejected Christ; and their children have been smarting under wrath these eighteen hundred years. God grant that the bad treatment given to Christ and his gospel, by this generation, be not pursued with wrath on the succeeding one.

Use 2. Of EXHORTATION. Here I shall drop a word, 1. To those who are yet in an unregenerate state.

2. To those who are brought out of it.

3. To all equally.

1. To you who are yet in an UNREGENERATE state, I would sound the alarm, and warn you to see to yourselves, while there is yet hope. O, you children of wrath take no rest in this dismal state; but flee to Christ, the only refuge; hasten and make your escape there. The state of wrath is too hot a climate for you to live in, Micah 2:10, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest." O sinner, do you know where you are? Do you not see your danger? The curse has entered into your soul—wrath is your covering; the heavens are growing blacker and blacker above your head; the earth is weary of you, the pit is opening her mouth for you, and should the thread of your life be cut this moment, you are thenceforth past all hope forever!

Sirs, if we saw you putting a cup of poison to your mouth, we would run to you and snatch it out of your hands. If we saw the house on fire about you, while you were fast asleep in it, we would run to you, and drag you out of it. But alas! you are in ten thousand times greater hazard—yet we can do no more than tell you your danger; invite, exhort, and beseech you to look to yourselves; and lament your stupidity and obstinacy, when we cannot prevail with you to take warning. If there were no hope of your recovery, we would be silent, and would not torment you before the time—but though you be lost and undone, there is hope concerning this thing. Therefore, I cry unto you, in the name of the Lord, and in the words of the prophet, Zechariah 9:12, "Turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." Flee to Jesus Christ out of this, your natural state of sin and wrath.

Motive 1. While you are in this state, you must stand or fall according to the law, or covenant of works. If you understood this aright, it would strike through your hearts as a thousand darts. One had better be a slave to the Turks, condemned to the galleys, or under Egyptian bondage—than be under the covenant of works! All mankind were brought under it in Adam, as we heard before; and you, in your unregenerate state, are still where Adam left you. It is true, there is another covenant brought in—but what is that to you, who are not brought into it?

You must needs be under one of the two covenants; either under the law, or under grace. That you are not under grace, the dominion of sin over you manifestly proves; therefore, you are under the law, Romans 6:14. Do not think God has laid aside the first covenant, Matthew 5:17-18; Galatians 3:10. No, he will "magnify the law, and make it honorable." It is broken indeed on your part; but it is absurd to think, that therefore your obligation is dissolved. Nay, you must stand and fall by it, until you can produce your discharge from God himself, who is the party in that covenant; and this you cannot pretend to, seeing you are not in Christ.

Now, to give you a view of your misery, in this respect, consider these following things:

(1.) Hereby you are bound over to death, in virtue of the threatening of death in the covenant, Genesis 2:17. The condition being broken you fall under the penalty. So it concludes you under wrath.

(2.) There is no salvation for you under this covenant—but on a condition impossible to be performed by you. The justice of God must be satisfied for the wrong which you have done already. God has written this truth in characters of the blood of his own Son. Yes, and you must perfectly obey the law for the time to come. So says the law, Galatians 3:12, "The man who does them, shall live in them." Come then, O sinner! see if you can make a ladder, whereby you may reach the throne of God—stretch forth your arms, and try if you can fly on the wings of the wind, catch hold of the clouds, and pierce through these visible heavens; and then either climb over, or break through, the jasper walls of the city above. These things you may do, as well as be able to reach heaven in your natural state, under this covenant.

(3.) There is no pardon under this covenant. Pardon is the benefit of another covenant, with which you have nothing to do, Acts 13:39, "By him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." As for you, you are in the hands of a merciless creditor, who will take you by the throat, saying, "Pay what you owe!" and cast you into prison, there to remain until you have paid the utmost farthing—unless you be so wise as to get a surety in

time, who is able to answer for all your debt, and get up your discharge. This Jesus Christ alone can do. You abide under this covenant, and plead mercy; but what is your plea founded on? There is not one promise of mercy or pardon in that covenant. Do you plead mercy for mercy's sake? Justice will step in between it and you, and plead God's covenant threatening, which he cannot deny.

(4.) There is no place for repentance in this covenant, so as the sinner can be helped by it. For as soon as ever you sin, the law lays its curse on you, which is a dead weight you can by no means throw off; no, not though your "head were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, to weep day and night" for your sin. That is what the law cannot do, in that it is "weak through the flesh," Romans 8:3. You are another profane Esau, who has sold the blessing; and there is no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears, while under the covenant.

(5.) There is no acceptance of the will for the deed under this covenant, which was not made for good will—but good works. The mistake in this point ruins many. They are not in Christ—but stand under the first covenant; and yet they will plead this privilege. This is just like a man having made a feast for those of his own family, and when they sit down at table, another man's servant, who has run away from his master, presumptuously comes forward and sits down among them—would not the master of the feast give such a stranger that check, "Friend, why do you come in here?" and since he is none of his family, commanded him to be gone quickly. Though a master accept the good-will of his own child for the deed, can a hired servant expect that privilege?

(6.) You have nothing to do with Christ while under that covenant. By the law of God, a woman cannot be married to two husbands at once—either death or divorce must dissolve the first marriage, before she can marry another. So we must first be dead to the law, before we can be married to Christ, Romans 7:4. The law is the first husband; Jesus Christ, who raises the dead, marries the widow, who was heartbroken, and slain by the first husband. But while the soul is in the house with the first husband, it cannot plead a marriage relation to Christ; nor the benefits of a marriage covenant, which is not yet entered into, Galatians 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect to you; whoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace." Peace, pardon, and such like benefits, are all benefits of the covenant of grace. You must not think to stand off from Christ, and the marriage covenant with him, and yet plead these benefits, any more than one man's wife can plead the benefit of a contract of marriage passed between another man and his wife.

(7.) See the bill of exclusion, passed in the court of Heaven, against all under the covenant of works, Galatians 4:30, "The son of the bond-woman shall not be heir." Compare Galatians 4:24. Heirs of wrath must not be heirs of glory. Whom the first covenant has power to exclude out of heaven, the second covenant cannot bring into it.

OBJECTION. Then it is impossible for us to be saved.

Answer. It is so while you are in that state; but if you would be out of that dreadful condition, hasten out of that state. If a murderer be under sentence of death, so long as he lives within the kingdom, the laws will reach his life; but if he can make his escape, and get over the sea, into the dominions of another prince, our laws cannot reach him there. This is what we would have you to do; flee out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son; out of the dominion of the law, into the dominion of grace—then all the curses of the law, or covenant of works, shall

never be able to reach you.

Motive 2. O, you children of wrath, your state is wretched, for you have lost God, and that is an unspeakable loss. You are without God in the world, Ephesians 2:12. Whatever you may call yours, you cannot call God yours. If we look to the earth, perhaps you can tell us, that land, that house, or that herd of cattle—is yours. But let us look upward to heaven; is that God, that grace, that glory, yours? Truly, you have neither part no lot in this matter. When Nebuchadnezzar talks of cities and kingdoms, O how big does he speak! "Great Babylon, that I have built - my power - my majesty;" but he tells a poor tale, when he comes to speak of God, saying, "Your God," Daniel 2:47; Daniel 4:30. Alas, sinner! whatever you have, God is gone from you. O, the misery of a godless soul! Have you lost God? Then,

(1.) The sap and substance of all you have in the world is gone. The godless man, have what he will, is one who really has nothing, Matthew 25:29. I defy the unregenerate man to attain to soul satisfaction, whatever he possesses, since God is not his God. All his days he eats in darkness; in every condition there is a secret dissatisfaction which haunts his heart, like a Spirit. The soul wants something, though perhaps it knows not what; and so it will be always, until the soul returns to God, the fountain of satisfaction.

(2.) You can do nothing to purpose for yourself; for God is gone, his soul is departed from you, Jeremiah 6:8, like a leg out of joint hanging by, whereof a man has no use, as the word there used signifies. Losing God, you have lost the fountain of good; and so all grace, all goodness, all the saving influences of his Spirit. What can you do then? What fruit can you bring forth, more than a branch cut off from the stock? John 15:5. You are become unprofitable, Romans 3:12, as a filthy rotten thing, fit only for the ash-heap.

(3.) Death has come up into your windows, yes, and has settled on your face; for God, in whose favor life is, Psalms 30:5, is gone from you, and so the life of your soul is departed. What a loathsome lump is the body, when the soul is gone! Far more loathsome is your soul in this case. You are dead while you live. Do not deny it, seeing your speech is laid, your eyes closed, and all spiritual motion in you ceased. Your true friends who see your case, lament, because you are gone into the land of silence.

(4.) You have not a steady friend among all the creatures of God; for now that you have lost the master’s favor, all the family is set against you. Conscience is your enemy; the word never speaks good of you; God’s people loathe so far as they see what you are, Psalms 15:4. The beasts and stones of the field are banded together against you, Job 5:23; Hosea 2:18. Your food, drink, and clothes, grudge being serviceable to the wretch that has lost God, and abuses them to his dishonor. The earth groans under you; yes, "the whole creation groans, and travails in pain together," because of you, and such as you are, Romans 8:22. Heaven will have nothing to do with you; for "there shall never enter into it, anything that defiles," Revelation 21:27. Only "hell from beneath, is eager to greet your coming," Isaiah 14:9.

(5.) Your hell is begun already. What makes hell—but exclusion from the presence of God? "Depart from me, you cursed." You are gone from God already, with the curse upon you. That which is now your choice, shall be your punishment at length, if you do not repent. As a gracious state is a state of glory in the bud; so a graceless state is hell in the bud, which, if it continue, will

come at length to perfection.

Motive 3. Consider the dreadful instances of the wrath of God, and let them serve to awaken you to flee out of this state. Consider,

(1.) How it is fallen on men. Even in this world, many have been set up as monuments of Divine vengeance—that others might fear. Wrath has swept away multitudes, who have fallen together by the hand of an angry God. Consider how the Lord "spared not the old world - bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those who after would live ungodly," 2 Peter 2:5-6. But it is yet more dreadful to think of that weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, among those who in hell lift up their eyes—but cannot get a drop of water to cool their tongues. Believe these things and be warned by them, lest destruction come upon you, for a warning to others.

(2.) Consider how wrath fell upon the fallen angels, whose case is absolutely hopeless. They were the first that ventured to break the hedge of the Divine law; and God set them up for monuments of his wrath against sin. They once "left their own habitation," and were never allowed to look in again at the keyhole of the door; but they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day," Jude 1:6.

(3.) Behold how an angry God dealt with his own Son, standing in the place of elect sinners, Romans 8:32, "God spared not his Son." Sparing mercy might have been expected here—if any place at all. If any person could have obtained it, surely his own Son would have got it—but he spared him not. The Father’s delight—is made a man of sorrows! He who is the wisdom of God—becomes sore amazed, ready to faint away in a fit of horror. The weight of this wrath makes him sweat great drops of blood. By the fierceness of this fire, his heart was melted like wax.

Behold, here, how severe God is against sin! The sun was struck blind with this terrible sight, rocks were rent, graves opened; death, as it were, in the excess of astonishment, letting its prisoners slip away. What is a deluge, a shower of fire and brimstone, on the people of Sodom, the terrible noise of a dissolving world, the whole fabric of heaven and earth disuniting at once, and angels cast down from heaven into the bottomless pit! What are all these, I say, in comparison with this—God in human nature suffering! groaning! dying upon a cross! Infinite holiness did it, to make sin look like itself, that is, infinitely odious. And will men live at ease, while exposed to this wrath?

Motive 4. Unrepentant sinner! Consider what a God he is—with whom you have to do, and whose wrath you are liable unto. He is the God of infinite knowledge and wisdom; so that none of your sins, however secret, can be hidden from him. He infallibly finds out all means, whereby wrath may be executed, toward the satisfying of justice. He is of infinite power, and so can do what he will against the sinner. How heavy must the strokes of wrath be, which are laid on by an omnipotent hand! Infinite power can make the sinner its prisoner, even when he is in his greatest rage against Heaven. It can bring again the several parcels of dust out of the grave, put them together again, reunite the soul and body, summon them before the tribunal, hurry them away to the pit, and hold them up with the one hand, through eternity, while they are lashed with the other! He is infinitely just, and therefore must punish. It would be acting contrary to his nature—to allow the rebellious

sinner to escape wrath. Hence the executing of this wrath is pleasing to him—for though the Lord has no delight in the death of a sinner, as it is the destruction of his own creature—yet he delights in it, as it is the execution of justice. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest." Mark the reason—"For the righteous Lord loves righteousness," Psalms 11:6-7. "I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted," Ezekiel 5:13. "I also will laugh at your calamity," Proverbs 1:26. Finally, He lives forever, to pursue the quarrel. Let us therefore conclude, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Be awakened then, O young sinner! be awakened, O old sinner! You are yet in the state of wrath, in which you were born in! Your security is the sleep of death; rise out of it, before the pit closes its mouth upon you. It is true, you may put on a breastplate of iron, make your brow brass, and your heart as hard as adamant. But God will break that brazen brow, and make that adamantine heart at last to fly into a thousand pieces! You may, if you will, labor to put these things out of your heads, that you may sleep in fancied safety, though in a state of wrath. You may run away, with the arrows sticking in your consciences, to your job, to work them away. You may go to your beds, to sleep them out; or to company, to sport and laugh them away—but convictions, so stifled, will have a fearful resurrection; and the day is coming, unless you take warning in time, when the arrows of wrath shall so stick in your soul, as you shall never be able to pluck them out through the ages of eternity!

But if any desire to flee from the wrath to come, and, for that end, to know what course to take—I offer them these few ADVICES; and implore and beseech them, as they love their own souls, to comply with them.

(1.) Retire to some secret place and there meditate on this, your misery. Believe it, and fix your thoughts on it. Let each put the question to himself, How can I live in this state? How can I die in it? How shall I rise again, and stand before the tribunal of God in it?

(2.) Consider seriously the sin of your nature, heart, and life. A proper sight of wrath flows from a deep sense of sin. Those who see themselves exceedingly sinful, will find no great difficulty to perceive themselves to be heirs of wrath.

(3.) Labor to justify God in this matter. To quarrel with God about it, and to rage like a wild bull in a net, will but fix you the more in it. Humiliation of soul before the Lord is necessary for an escape. God will not sell deliverance—but freely gives it to those who see themselves altogether unworthy of his favor.

01.02b1 2. The MISERY of man's natural state con

(4.) Turn your eyes, O prisoners of hope, towards the Lord Jesus Christ; and embrace him, as he offers himself in the gospel. "There is no salvation in any other," Acts 4:12. God is a consuming fire; you are children of wrath—if the Mediator does not interpose between him and you—you are undone forever! If you would be safe, come under his shadow—one drop of that wrath cannot fall there, for he "delivers us from the wrath to come," 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Accept of him in this covenant, wherein he offers himself to you; so you shall, as the captive woman, redeem your life, by marrying the conqueror. His blood will quench that fire of wrath which burns against you—in the white raiment of his righteousness you will be safe; for no storm of wrath can pierce it.

2. I shall drop a few words to the SAINTS.

"Remember that at that time you were without Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12

(1.) "REMEMBER—that at that time," namely, when you were in your natural state, "you were without Christ - having no hope, and without God in the world." Call to mind the state you were in formerly; and review the misery of it. There are five memorials which I may thence give in to the whole assembly of the saints, who are no longer children of wrath—but "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," though as yet in their minority.

[1.] Remember—that in the day our Lord first took you by the hand, you were in no better a condition than others. O, what moved Him to take you—when He passed by your neighbors? He found you children of wrath, even as others—but He did not leave you so. He came into the common prison, where you lay in fetters, even as others. From among the multitude of condemned malefactors, He picked you out, commanded your fetters to be taken off, put a pardon in your hand, and brought you into the glorious liberty of the children of God—while He left others in the devil’s fetters!

[2.] Remember—there was nothing in you to engage Him to love you, in the day he appeared for your deliverance. You were children of wrath, even as others; fit for hell, and altogether unfit for heaven! Yet the King brought you into the palace; the King’s Son made love to you, a condemned criminal, and espoused you to Himself, on the day in which you might have been led forth to execution! "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight!" Matthew 11:26.

[3.] Remember—you were fitter to be loathed, than loved, in that day. Be amazed and wonder! that when He saw you in your blood, that He did not look upon you with abhorrence, and pass you by. Wonder, that ever such a time could be a time of love, Ezekiel 16:8.

[4.] Remember—you are decked with borrowed garments. It is His loveliness which is upon you, Ezekiel 16:14. It was He who took off your prison garments, and clothed you with robes of righteousness, garments of salvation; garments with which you are arrayed as the lilies, which toil not, neither do they spin. He took the chains from off your arms, the rope from about your neck;

put you in such a dress, as you might be fit for the court of heaven, even to eat at the King’s table!

[5.] Remember your faults this day, as Pharaoh’s butler, who had forgotten Joseph. Mind how you have forgotten, and how unkindly you have treated Him who remembered you in your dreadful estate. Is this your kindness to your friend? In the day of your deliverance, did you think you could have thus requited Him, your Lord?

(2.) PITY the children of wrath—the world which lies in wickedness. Can you be unconcerned for them, you who were once in the same condition? You have got ashore, indeed—but your companions are yet in hazard of perishing; and will not you afford them all possible help for their deliverance? What they are—you formerly were. This may draw pity from you, and engage you to use all means for their recovery. See Titus 3:1-3.

(3.) Admire that matchless love which brought you out of the state of wrath. Christ’s love was active love; He brought your soul from the pit of corruption! It was no easy work to purchase the life of the condemned sinner; but He gave His life for your life. He gave His precious blood to quench the flame of wrath, which otherwise would have consumed you! Men get the best view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit; from this pit of misery, into which you were cast by the fall of the first Adam, you may get the best view of the Sun of Righteousness, in all his dimensions. He is the second Adam, who took you out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. How broad was that love, which covered such a multitude of sins! Behold the length of it, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, Psalms 103:17. The depth of it, going so low as to deliver you from the lowest hell, Psalms 86:13. The height of it, raising you up to sit in heavenly places, Ephesians 2:6.

(4.) Be HUMBLE, carry low sails, walk softly all your years. Be not proud of your gifts, graces, privileges, or attainments; but remember you were children of wrath, even as others. The peacock walks slowly, hangs down his lovely feathers, while he looks to his black feet. "Look to the hole of the pit whence you are dug;" and walk humbly, as it becomes free grace’s debtors.

(5.) Be wholly for your Lord. Every wife is obliged to be dutiful to her husband; but double ties lie upon her who was taken from a prison, or an ash-heap. If your Lord has delivered you from wrath, you ought, on that very account, to be wholly his; to act for him, to suffer tor him, and to do whatever he calls you to. The saints have no reason to complain of their lot in the world, whatever it is. Well may they bear the cross for Him—by whom the curse was borne away from them. Well may they bear the wrath of men in his cause—who has freed them from the wrath of God; and cheerfully go to a fire for him, by whom hell-fire is quenched as to them.

Soul and body, and all you had in the world, were formerly under wrath—he has removed that wrath; shall not all these be at his service? That your soul is not overwhelmed with the wrath of God, is owing purely to Jesus Christ; and shall it not be a temple for his Spirit? That your heart is not filled with horror and despair is owing to Him only; to whom then should it be devoted—but to him alone? That your eyes are not blinded with the smoke of the pit; your hands not fettered with chains of darkness; your tongue is not broiling in the fire of hell; and your feet are not standing in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone—is owing purely to Jesus Christ! and shall not these eyes be employed for him, these hands act for him, this tongue speak for him, and these feet speedily run his errands? To him who believes that he was a child of wrath, even as others—but is now delivered by the blessed Jesus, nothing will appear too much, to do or suffer for his Deliverer,

when he has a fair call to it.

3. To conclude with a word to ALL. Let no man think lightly of sin—which lays the sinner open to the wrath of God. Let not the sin of our nature—which wreathes the yoke of God's wrath so early about our necks—seem a small thing in our eyes. Fear the Lord because of his dreadful wrath. Tremble at the thought of sin, against which God has such fiery indignation. Look on his wrath—and stand in awe—and sin not! Do you think this is to press you to slavish fear? If it were so, one had better be a slave to God with a trembling heart, than a free man to the devil, with a seared conscience and a heart of adamant. But it is not so; you may love him, and thus fear him too; yes, you ought to do it, though you were saints of the first magnitude. See Psalms 119:120; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5; Hebrews 12:28-29. Although you have passed the gulf of wrath, being in Jesus Christ—yet it is but reasonable that your hearts should shiver when you look back to it. Your sin still deserves wrath, even as the sins of others; and it would be terrible to be in a fiery furnace, although by a miracle we were so protected against it, as that it could not harm us.

01.02c. The INABILITY of man's natural state

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) I. The State of INNOCENCE II. The State of NATURE 1. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state 2. The MISERY of man’s natural state 3. The INABILITY of man’s natural state "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." John 6:44

We have now had a view of the total corruption of man’s nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration, namely, his utter inability to recover himself; the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability; that he may see an absolute need of Christ and of the power of his grace. As a man who is fallen into a deep pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it—but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others. Just so, an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state—but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Savior. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways. Not the first way; for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, "we were without strength," unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath; yet "without strength," unable to stand under it; and unable to throw it off, or get from under it—so that all mankind would have undoubtedly perished, had not "Christ died for the ungodly," and brought help to those who could never have recovered themselves. But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No! the second text tells, they cannot—"No man can come unto me," etc.; that is, believe in me, John 6:44, "unless the Father draws him." This is a drawing which enables them to come, who, until then could not come; and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered. This is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than "hearing and learning the Father," which, whoever partakes of, comes to Christ, John 6:45. Therefore, it is not drawing in the way of mere moral persuasion. This drawing is always is effectual. It is drawing by mighty power, Ephesians 1:12, absolutely necessary for those who have no power in themselves to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced that as you are in a most miserable state by nature, so you are utterly unable to recover yourself in any way. You are ruined; and what way will you go to work, to recover yourself? Which of the two ways will you choose? Will you try it alone--or will you make use of help? Will you fall on the way of works--or on the way of the Gospel? I know very well that you will not so much as try the way of the Gospel, until once you have found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore, we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

I. Sinner, I would have you to believe that YOUR WORKING will never effect it. Work, and do your best; you will never be able to work yourself out of this state of corruption and wrath. You must have Christ, else you will perish eternally. It is only "Christ in you" that can be the hope of glory. But if you will needs try it, then I must lay before you, from the unalterable word of the living God, two things which you must do for yourself. If you can do them, it must be yielded, that you are able to recover yourself; but if not, then you can do nothing this way for your recovery.

1. "If you will enter into life keep the commandments," Matthew 19:17. That is, if you will by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commandments; for the object of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Savior, from the impossibility of keeping the law. The answer is given suitably to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, "Good Master," Matthew 19:16, telling him, "There is none good but one, that is God," Matthew 19:17. As if he had said, You think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. As to his question, wherein he discovered his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, "Believe and you shall be saved;" that would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew "what good he should do;" but, suitable to the humor the man was in, he bids him "keep the commandments," keep them precisely and accurately, as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape, and their life be taken for those which escape. See then, O unregenerate man, what you can do in this matter; for if you will recover yourself in this way, you must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

(1.) Your obedience must be perfect, in respect of the PRINCIPLE of it; that is, your soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin. For the law requires all moral perfection; not only actual—but habitual—and so condemns original sin; impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if you can bring this to pass, you will be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" Proverbs 20:9. But if you cannot, the very lack of this perfection is sin, and so lays you open to the curse and cuts you off from life. Yes, it makes all your actions, even your best actions, sinful. For "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job 14:4. And do you think by sin--to help yourself out of sin and misery?

(2.) Your obedience must also be perfect in PARTS. It must be as broad as the whole law of God—if you lack one thing, you are undone; for the law denounces the curse on him who continues not in everything written therein, Galatians 3:10. You must give internal and external obedience to the whole law. You must keep all the commands in heart and life. If you break any one of them, that will ensure your ruin. A vain thought, or idle word, will still shut you up under the curse.

(3.) It must be perfect in respect of DEGREES; as was the obedience of Adam, while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less, Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." If one degree of that love, required by the law, be lacking; if each part of your obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded; that lack is a breach of the law, and so leaves you still under the curse. A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire, as he is able to carry; and yet it may be consumed, and will be so, if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even

so, although you should do what you are able, in keeping the commandments, if you fail in the least degree of obedience, which the law enjoins, you are certainly ruined forever; unless you take hold of Christ, renouncing all your own righteousness, as filthy rags. See Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10.

(4.) It must be PERPETUAL, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things which pleased the Father; for the tenor of the law is, "Cursed is he who continues not in all things written in the law to do them." Hence, though Adam's obedience was, for a while, absolutely perfect; yet because at length he failed in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law. If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his prince, until the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though you should, all the time of your life, live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought, or pronounce an idle word, that idle word, or vain thought, would blot out all your former righteousness, and ruin you; namely, in this way in which you are seeking to recover yourself.

Now, such is the obedience which you must perform, if you would recover yourself in the way of the law. But though you would thus obey, the law stakes you down in the state of wrath, until another demand of it be satisfied.

2. You must pay what you owe. It is undeniable that you are a sinner; and whatever you may be in time to come; justice must be satisfied for your sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained, by your suffering the denounced wrath. It may be you have changed your course of life, or are now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping the commands of God—but what have you done, or what will you do, with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him, for the time wherein it is performed; and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay, deceive not yourselves; you will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures, Deuteronomy 32:34. It remains then, that either you must bear that wrath, to which for your sin you are liable, according to the law; or else you must acknowledge that you can not bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the surety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me now ask you, Are you able to satisfy the justice of God? Can you pay your own debt? Surely not—for, as he is the infinite God, whom you have offended; the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But your punishment, or sufferings for sin, cannot be infinite in value, for you are a finite creature—therefore, they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all your sufferings in this world are but an pledge of what you must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if you can answer these demands, you may recover yourself in the way of the law. But are you not conscious of your inability to do any of these things; much more to do them all? yet if you do not all, you do nothing. Turn, then, to what course of life you will, you are still in a state of wrath. Pitch up your obedience to the greatest height you can; suffer what God lays upon you; yes, and walk under all without the least impatience—yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law; therefore, you are still a ruined creature. Alas, sinner! what are you doing, while you strive to help yourself—but do not receive, and unite with, Jesus Christ? You are laboring in the fire, wearying

yourself for very vanity; laboring to enter into heaven, by the door which Adam's sin so bolted, that neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Do you not see the flaming sword of justice, keeping you off from the tree of life? Do you not hear the law denouncing a curse on you, for all you are doing; even for your obedience, your prayers, your tears, your reformation of life, and so on—because, being under the law's dominion, your best works are not so good as it requires them to be, under the pain of the curse?

Believe it, sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to him as the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of his atoning blood; though you should do the utmost that any man can do, in keeping the commands of God, you can never see the face of God in peace. If you should, from this moment, bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls; if you should go into some wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to beasts and owls; if you should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until you had wept yourselves blind; if you should confess with your tongue, until it cleaves to the roof of your mouth; if you should pray, until your knees grow hard as horns; if you should fast, until your body become like a skeleton; and, after all this, give it to be burnt—the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness, and cannot return, that you shall perish forever, notwithstanding all this, as not being in Christ; John 14:6, "No man comes unto the Father—but by me." Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other." Mark 16:16, "He who believes not, shall be damned."

OBJECTION. But God is a merciful God, and he knows that we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able.

Answer 1. Though you are able to do many things, you are not able to do one thing right—you can do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ, John 15:6, "Without me you can do nothing." An unrenewed man, as you are, can do nothing but sin; as we have already proved. Your best actions are sin, and so they increase your debt to justice—how then can it be expected they should lessen it?

Answer 2. Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to his commands—yet we have reason to think, that those who should attempt it, would never be saved—for where is the man that does as well as he can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell, that we surely must fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But,

Answer 3. Though you should do all you are able to do, in vain do you hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of your founded on? It is neither founded on law nor gospel; therefore, it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the Gospel; for the Gospel leads the soul out of itself, to Jesus Christ for all; and it establishes the law, Romans 3:31. Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established—but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears, that it is not founded on the law either. When God set Adam a-working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the condition required of him; and the curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The law being broken by him, he and his

posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed; and withal were still bound to perfect obedience—for it is absurd to think, that man's sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When Christ came in the place of the elect, to purchase their salvation, the terms were the same. Justice had the elect under arrest—if he is desirous to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy the justice of God for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; he must do what they cannot do, namely, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness. Accordingly, all this he did, and so became "the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes," Romans 10:4. And do you think that God will abate these terms as to you, when his own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though you should beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God, Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them." Galatians 3:12, "And the law is not of faith—but, the man who does them, shall live in them."

It is true, that God is merciful—but cannot he be merciful, unless he saves you in a way that is neither consistent with his law, nor his Gospel? Have not his goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared, in sending the Son of his love, to do "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh?" He has provided help for those who cannot help themselves—but you, insensible of your own weakness, must needs think to recover yourself by your own works, while you are no more able to do it, than to remove mountains of brass out of their place.

Therefore I conclude, that you are utterly unable to recover yourself, in the way of works, or by the law. O, that you would conclude the same concerning yourself!

II. Let us try, next, what the sinner can do to recover himself, in the way of the GOSPEL. It may be you think, that you can not do all by yourself alone—yet Jesus Christ offering you help, you can of yourself embrace it, and use it for your recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of your absolute need of the grace of Christ—for truly, there is help offered—but you can not accept it; there is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land—but, alas! they have no hands to lay hold of it. They are like infants exposed in the open field, who must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless some one put it in their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the gospel—yet they cannot believe in him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect; the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by his Spirit. Salvation is offered to those who will believe in Christ—but how can you believe? John 5:44. It is offered to those that will come to Christ; but "no man can come unto him, unless the Father draws him." It is offered to those that will look to him, as lifted on the pole of the gospel, Isaiah 45:22—but the natural man is spiritually blind, Revelation 3:17; and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Nay, whoever will, he is welcome; let him come, Revelation 22:17; but there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he can be willing, Psalms 110:3.

2. Man naturally has nothing with which to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath; and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of the cords of love thrown out to him in the gospel. The most skillful artificer cannot work without tools; neither can the most skillful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune. How can anyone believe, or repent--whose understanding is darkness, Ephesians 5:8; whose heart is a

stony heart, inflexible, insensible, Ezekiel 36:26; whose affections are wholly disordered and distempered; who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help—hence those who most excel in them, are often most estranged from spiritual things, Matthew 11:25, "You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent."

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself—but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature; and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate; begotten again unto a lively hope—but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active, but passive only, in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ—man cannot open it; only God can do it by his grace, Acts 16:14. He is dead in sin; he must be quickened, raised out of his grave—who can do this but God himself? Ephesians 2:1-5 . Nay, he must be "created in Christ Jesus, unto good works," Ephesians 2:10. These are works of omnipotence, and can be done by no less a power.

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do anything truly good, as was proved before at large—how, then, can he obey the gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the gospel—how can he, of himself, fall in with that plan of salvation, and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man’s nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and whoever is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man, for one good thought, he cannot command it, 2 Corinthians 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves." Were it offered on condition of a good word—yet "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" Matthew 12:35. Nay, were it left to yourselves, to choose what is easiest, Christ himself tells you, John 15:5, "Without me, you can do nothing."

5. The natural man always resists the Lord’s offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace. Can the stony heart but choose to resist the stroke? There is not only an inability—but an enmity and obstinacy in man’s will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether you know it or not, that "you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass," Isaiah 48:4, and cannot be overcome—but by him, who has "broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Hence, commonly speaking, there is such hard work in converting a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him; but he struggles, until, getting free of it, he goes away with a bleeding wound. When good hopes are conceived of him, by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him, there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many contrivances to avoid a Savior, and cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, and utterly unable to recover himself.

Objection 1. If we are under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it?

Answer. God making man upright, Ecclesiastes 7:29, gave him a power to do everything that he should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever he commanded us, as being his creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant, for that purpose. Now, we having, by our own fault, disabled ourselves, shall God lose his right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength he gave us

whereby to perform it? Has the creditor no right to require payment of his money, because the debtor has squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath—but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do; and so the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath—for where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin, there can be no wrath. As to what may be urged by the unhumbled soul, against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was explained before. But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found among the ruins of mankind. Nay, farther, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself; so that out of his own mouth, he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency too good a covert to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and, under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a deathbed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, he can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If he has power to exact the debt of obedience, he has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison, for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities—yet they lack not natural abilities, which nevertheless they will not improve. There are many things they can do, which they do not; they will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just. Nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary; they will not come to Christ, John 5:40. They will not repent, they will die, Ezekiel 18:31. So they will be justly condemned, because they will neither turn to God, nor come to Christ; but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light, John 3:19.

Objection 2. Why do you, then, preach Christ to us—call us to come to him, to believe, repent, and use the means of salvation?

Answer. Because it is our duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel; to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation—these things are commanded you of God; and his command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of, for converting his elect, and working grace in their hearts—to them, "faith comes by hearing," Romans 10:17, while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in his name, "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light," Ephesians 5:14. And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion; as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains; so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God himself directs as he sees fit.

Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them. Such people may be convinced, though they be not converted—although they be not sanctified by these means—yet they may be restrained by them, from running into that

excess of wickedness, which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serve, as it were, to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them—though they do not restore them to life—yet they keep them from putrefying, as otherwise they would do.

Finally, Though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel; yet even by the power of nature, you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. You may and can, if you please, do many things that would set you in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet Scribe had done, Mark 12:34, though, it should seem, he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though you cannot cure yourselves—yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased people as you are, have been cured; though you have none to put you into it—yet you may lie at the side of it—"Who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind him?" as in the case of the impotent man, recorded in John 5:5-8.

I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord's day; but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom's doors if you will. When you come there, I hope that Satan does not beat drums at your ears, that you cannot hear what is said; I hope there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; I hope you may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition. When you go home, I hope you are not fettered in your houses, where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard; but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate, and exercise your consciences with suitable questions upon what you have heard. I hope you are not possessed with a dumb devil, that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. I hope you are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and, from your worldly business to your beds again—but you might, if you would, make some prayer to God upon the case of your perishing souls. I hope you may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; I hope you may discern that you have no grace, and that you are lost and undone without it; and you may cry unto God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. If you do not what you can, you will be condemned, not only for the lack of grace—but for your despising it.

Objection 3. But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath.

Answer. Give not place to that delusion, which puts asunder what God has joined, namely, the use of means, and a sense of our own impotency. If ever the Spirit of God graciously influences your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability, and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves, as if you were to do all; and yet overlook all you do, as if you had done nothing. Will you do nothing for yourselves, because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot. "Do you understand what you read?" said Philip to the eunuch; "How can I," said he "except some man should guide me?" Acts 8:30-31. He could not understand the scripture he read—yet he could

read it—he did what he could, he read; and while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when on the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy in pursuit; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? "Speak unto the children of Israel," says the Lord to Moses, "that they go forward," Exodus 14:15. For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; but let them go forward, says the Lord—though they cannot turn the sea to dry land—yet they can go forward to the shore. So they did; and when they did what they could, God did for them what they could not do.

Question. Has God promised to convert and save those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief?

Answer. We may not speak wickedly for God—natural men, being strangers to the covenant of promise, Ephesians 2:12, have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless, they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For,

(1.) It is possible this course may succeed with them. If you do what you can, it may be, God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is, Acts 8:22, "Pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you." Joel 2:14, "Who knows if he will return?" If success may be, the trial should be. If, in a wreck at sea, all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety; and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavor to save themselves—yet the very possibility of escaping by that means, would determine that one still to do his best with his board. Why, then, do not you reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did, who sat at the gate of Samaria? 2 Kings 7:3-4. Why do you not say, "If we sit still," not doing what we can, "we will surely die;" let us put it to a trial—if we can be saved, "we shall live;" if not "we shall but die?"

(2.) It is probable this course may succeed—God is good and merciful; he loves to surprise men with his grace, and is often "found by those who sought him not," Isaiah 65:1. If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty; and you are using the means, which the Lord is accustomed to bless, for men’s spiritual recovery—you lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician; and so it is probable you may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place "where prayer was accustomed to be made;" and "the Lord opened her heart," Acts 16:13-14. You plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you will get so much as your seed again—you use means for the recovery of your health, though you are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you; and why not in this also? Importunity, we see, does very much with men—therefore, pray, meditate, desire help of God; be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace; and do not faint. Though God regards you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul; yet he may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of his own appointment, and he may bless them to you. Therefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead—but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life. To CONCLUDE. Let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them; raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath, wherein they

would have lain and perished, had not they been mercifully visited.

Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know, that you are without strength—and can not come to Christ, until you be drawn. You are lost, and can not help yourself. This may shake the foundation of your hopes, if you never saw your absolute need of Christ and his grace—but think to contrive for yourself by your civility, morality, drowsy wishes, and duties; and by a faith and repentance, which have sprung out of your natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O, be convinced of your absolute need of Christ, and his overcoming grace; believe your utter inability to recover yourself; that so you may be humbled, shaken out of your self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out your miserable case before the Lord. A proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

Thus far of man’s natural state, the state of entire depravation.

01.03. The State of GRACE

03. The State of GRACE

a. Regeneration

b. Mystical Union

01.03a Regeneration

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) I. The State of INNOCENCE II. The State of NATURE 1. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state 2. The MISERY of man’s natural state 3. The INABILITY of man’s natural state III. The State of GRACE

1. REGENERATION

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." 1 Peter 1:23

We proceed now to the state of grace, the state of begun recovery of human nature, into which all who shall partake of eternal happiness are translated, sooner or later, while in this world. It is the result of a gracious change made upon those who shall inherit eternal life: which change may be taken up in these two particulars:

1. In opposition to their natural real state, the state of corruption, there is a change made upon them in regeneration; whereby their nature is changed.

2. In opposition to their natural relative state, the state of wrath, there is a change made upon them in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ; by which they are placed beyond the reach of condemnation.

These, therefore, regeneration and union with Christ, I desire to treat on as the great and comprehensive changes on a sinner, bringing him into the state of grace. The first of these we have in the text; together with the outward and ordinary means by which it is brought about. The apostle here, to excite the saints to the study of holiness, and particularly of brotherly love, puts them in mind of their spiritual original. He tells them that they were born again; and that of incorruptible seed, the word of God. This shows them to be brethren, partakers of the same new nature: which is the root from which holiness, and particularly brotherly love, springs. We have been once born sinners: we must be born again, that we may be saints. The simple word signifies "to be begotten;" and so it may be read, Matthew 11:11; "to be conceived," Matthew 1:20; and "to be born," Matthew 2:1. Accordingly, the compound word, used in the text, may be taken in its full latitude, the last idea presupposing the two former: so regeneration is a supernatural real change on the whole man, fitly compared to the natural birth, as will afterwards appear. The ordinary means of regeneration, called the "seed," whereof the new creature is formed, is not corruptible seed. Of such, indeed, our bodies are generated: but the spiritual seed of which the new creature is generated, is incorruptible; namely, "the word of God, which lives and abides forever." The sound of the word of God passes, even as other sounds do; but the word lasts, lives, and abides, in respect of its everlasting effects, on all upon whom it operates. This "word, which by the gospel is preached unto you," ver. 25, impregnated by the Spirit of God, is the means of regeneration: and by it dead sinners are raised to life.

Doctrine. All men in the state of grace, are born again. All gracious people, namely, such as are in a state of favor with God, and endowed with gracious qualities and dispositions, are regenerate people. In discoursing on this subject, I shall show, 1. What regeneration is.

2. Why it is so called.

3. Apply the doctrine.

I. Of the Nature of regeneration. For the better understanding of the nature of regeneration, take this along with you, that as there are false conceptions in nature, so there are also in grace: by these many are deluded, mistaking some partial changes made upon them, for this great and thorough change. To remove such mistakes, let these few things be considered:

(1.) Many call the church their mother, whom God will not own to be his children, Song of Solomon 1:6, "My mother's children," that is, false brethren, "were angry with me." All that are baptized, are not born again. Simon was baptized—yet still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts 8:13; Acts 8:23. Where Christianity is the religion of the country, many are called by the name of Christ, who have no more of him than the name: and no wonder, for the devil had his goats among Christ's sheep, in those places where but few professed the Christian religion, 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us—but they were not of us."

(2.) Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men's lusts—but cannot change their hearts. A wolf is still a ravenous beast, though it be in chains. Joash was very devout during the life of his good tutor Jehoiada; but afterwards he quickly showed what spirit he was of, by his sudden apostasy, 2 Chronicles 24:2-18. Good example is of mighty influence to change the outward man: but that change often goes off, when a man changes his company; of which the world affords many sad instances.

(3.) A turning from open profanity, to civility and sobriety, falls short of this saving change. Some are, for a while, very loose, especially in their younger years; but at length they reform, and leave their profane courses. Here is a change—yet only such as may be found in men utterly void of the grace of God, and whose righteousness is so far from exceeding, that it does not come up to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

(4.) One may engage in all the outward duties of religion, and yet not be born again. Though lead be cast into various shapes, it remains still but a base metal. Men may escape the pollutions of the world, and yet be but dogs and swine, 2 Peter 2:20-22. All the external acts of religion are within the compass of natural abilities. Yes, hypocrites may have the counterfeit of all the graces of the Spirit: for we read of "true holiness," Ephesians 4:24, and "sincere faith," 1 Timothy 1:5; which shows us that there is counterfeit holiness, and a feigned faith.

(5.) Men may advance to a great deal of strictness in their own way of religion, and yet be strangers to the new birth, Acts 26:5, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." Nature has its own unsanctified strictness in religion. The Pharisees had so much of it, that they looked on Christ as little better than a mere libertine. A man whose conscience has been awakened, and who lives under the felt influence of the covenant of works, what will he not do that is within the compass of natural abilities? It is a truth, though it came out of a hellish mouth, that "skin for skin, yes all that a man has will he give for his life," Job 2:4.

(6.) A person may have sharp soul-exercises and pangs, and yet die in the birth. Many "have been in pain," that have but, "as it were, brought forth wind." There may be sore pangs of conscience, which turn to nothing at last. Pharaoh and Simon Magus had such convictions, as made them to desire the prayers of others for them. Judas repented: and, under terrors of conscience, gave back his ill-gotten pieces of silver. All is not gold that glitters. Trees may blossom fairly in the spring, on which no fruit is to be found in the harvest: and some have sharp soul-exercises, which are nothing but foretastes of hell. The new birth, however in appearance hopefully begun, may be MARRED two ways.

(1.) Some have sharp convictions for a while: but these go off, and they become as careless about their salvation, and as profane as ever, and usually worse than ever; "their last state is worse than their first," Matthew 12:45. They get awakening grace—but not converting grace; and that goes off by degrees, as the light of the declining day, until it issues in midnight darkness.

Others come forth too soon; they are born, like Ishmael, before the time of the promise, Genesis 16:2; compare Galatians 4:22, etc. They take up with a mere law work, and stay not until the time of the promise of the gospel. They snatch at consolation, not waiting until it be given them; and foolishly draw their comfort from the law which wounded them. They apply the healing plaster to themselves, before their wound is sufficiently searched. The law, that rigorous husband, severely beats them, and throws in curses and vengeance upon their souls; then they fall to reforming, praying, mourning, promising, and vowing; which done, they fall asleep again in the arms of the law: but they are never shaken out of themselves and their own righteousness, nor brought forward to Jesus Christ.

(2.) There may be a wonderful moving of the affections in souls that are not at all touched with regenerating grace. When there is no grace, there may, notwithstanding, be a flood of tears, as in Esau, who "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," Hebrews 12:17. There may be great flashes of joy; as in the hearers of the word, represented in the parable of the stony ground, who "with joy receive it," Matthew 13:20. There may be also great desires after good things, and great delight in them too; as in those hypocrites described in Isaiah 58:2, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways - they take delight in approaching to God." See how high they may sometimes stand—who yet fall away, Hebrews 6:4-6. They may be "enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift," "be partakers of the Holy Spirit, taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Common operations of the divine Spirit, like a land-flood, make a strange turning of things upside down: but when they are over, all runs again in the ordinary channel. All these things may be, where the sanctifying Spirit of Christ never rests upon the soul—but the stony heart still remains; and in that case these affections cannot but wither, because they have no root. But regeneration is a real, thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17. The Lord God makes the creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down a vessel of dishonor, and makes it a vessel of honor. Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall; every faculty of the soul is, as it were, dislocated. In regeneration, the Lord loosens every joint, and sets it right again. Now this change made in regeneration, is,

1. A change of qualities or DISPOSITIONS. It is not a change of the substance—but of the qualities of the soul. Vicious qualities are removed, and the contrary dispositions are brought in, in

their place. "The old man is put off," Ephesians 4:22; "the new man is put on," Ephesians 4:24. Man lost none of the rational faculties of his soul by sin. He had an understanding still—but it was darkened; he had still a will—but it was contrary to the will of God. So in regeneration, there is not a new substance created—but new qualities or dispositions are infused; light instead of darkness, righteousness instead of unrighteousness.

2. It is a SUPERNATURAL change. He who is born again, is born of the Spirit, John 3:5. Great changes may be made by the power of nature, especially when assisted by external revelation. Nature may be so elevated by the common influences of the Spirit, that a person may thereby be turned into another man, as Saul was, 1 Samuel 10:6, who yet never becomes a new man. But in regeneration, nature itself is changed, and we become partakers of the divine nature; and this must needs be a supernatural change. How can we, who are dead in trespasses and sins, renew ourselves, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave? Who but the sanctifying Spirit of Christ can form Christ in a soul, changing it into his same image? Who but the Spirit of sanctification can give the new heart? Well may we say, when we see a man thus changed, "This is the finger of God!"

3. It is a change into the LIKENESS OF GOD. 2 Corinthians 3:18, "We beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord—are changed into the same image." Everything generates its like: the child bears the image of the parent; and they who are born of God, bear God’s image. Man aspiring to be as God, made himself like the devil. In his natural state he resembles the devil, as a child does his father, John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." But when this happy change comes, that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored. Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father’s glory, is the pattern after which the new creature is made, Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence Christ is said to be formed in the regenerate, Galatians 4:19.

4. It is a UNIVERSAL change. "All things become new," 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is a blessed leaven—which leavens the whole lump—the whole spirit, and soul, and body. Original sin infects the whole man; and regenerating grace, which is the cure, goes as far as the disease. This fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness; goodness of the mind, goodness of the will, goodness of the affections, goodness of the whole man. He gets not only a new head, to know and understand true religion; or a new tongue, to talk of it; but a new heart, to love and embrace it, in the whole of his life. When the Lord opens the sluice of grace, on the soul’s new-birth day, the waters run through the whole man, to purify and make him fruitful. In those natural changes spoken of before, there are, as it were, pieces of new cloth put into an old garment; new life to an old heart: but the gracious change is a thorough change; a change both of heart and life.

5. Yet, though every part of the man is renewed, there is no part of him which is perfectly renewed. As an infant has all the parts of a man—but none of them come to a perfect growth; so regeneration brings a perfection of parts, to be brought forward in the gradual advances of sanctification, 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." Although, in regeneration, there is heavenly light let into the mind; yet there is still some darkness there. Though the will is renewed, it is not perfectly renewed; there is still some of the old inclination to sin remaining: and thus it will be, until that which is in part is done away, and the light of glory come. Adam was created at his full stature; but those who are born, must have

their time to grow up; so those who are born again, come forth into the new world of grace as new-born babes: Adam being created upright, was at the same time perfectly righteous, without the least mixture of sinful imperfection.

6. Nevertheless, it is a LASTING change, which never entirely dies off. The seed is incorruptible, says the text; and so is the creature who is formed of it. The life given in regeneration, whatever decays it may fall under, can never be utterly lost. "His seed remains in him" who "is born of God," 1 John 3:9. Though the branches should be cut down, the root abides in the earth; and being watered with the dew of heaven, shall spout again: for "the root of the righteous shall not be moved," Proverbs 12:3. But to come to particulars.

1. In regeneration the MIND is savingly enlightened. There is a light let into the understanding; so that those who were "once darkness, are now light in the Lord," Ephesians 5:8. The beams of the light of life make their way into the dark dungeon of the heart: then the night is over, and the morning light is come, which will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

(1.) Now the man is illuminated, in the knowledge of GOD. He has far other thoughts of God, than ever he had before, Hosea 2:20, "I will even betrothe you unto me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord brings him back to this question, "What is God?" and catechises him anew upon that grand point, so that he is made to say, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you," Job 42:5. The spotless purity of God, his exact justice, his all-sufficiency, and other glorious perfections revealed in his word, are by this new light discovered to the soul, with a plainness and certainty, which as far exceed the knowledge it had of these things before, as ocular viewing exceeds common report. For now he sees, what he only heard of before.

(2.) He is enlightened in the knowledge of SIN. He has different thoughts of it than he used to have. Formerly his sight could not pierce through the cover Satan laid over it: but now the Spirit of God removes it, wipes off the paint and varnish: and so he sees it in its natural colors, as the worst of evils, exceedingly sinful, Romans 7:13. O, what deformed monsters—do formerly beloved lusts appear! Were they right eyes, he would pluck them out; were they right hands, he would consent to their being cut off. He sees how offensive sin is to God, how destructive it is to the soul; and calls himself a fool, for fighting so long against the Lord, and harboring that destroyer as a bosom friend!

(3.) He is instructed in the knowledge of HIMSELF. Regenerating grace brings the prodigal to himself, Luke 15:17, and makes men full of eyes within, knowing the plague of his own heart. The mind being savingly enlightened, the man sees how desperately corrupt his nature is; what enmity against God, and his holy law, has long lodged there: so that his soul loathes itself. No open sepulcher so vile and loathsome, in his eyes—as himself, Ezekiel 36:31, "Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." He is no worse than he was before—but the sun is now shining; and so those pollutions are seen, which he could not discern before—when there was no dawning in him, as the word is, Isaiah 8:20, while as yet there was no breaking of the day of grace with him.

(4.) He is enlightened in the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST. 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto those

who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The truth is, unregenerate men, though capable of preaching Christ, have not, properly speaking, the knowledge of him—but only an opinion, a good opinion, of him; as one has of many controverted points of doctrine, wherein he is far from certainty. As when you meet with a stranger on the road, who behaves himself discretely, you conceive a good opinion of him, and therefore willingly converse with him: but yet you will not commit your money to him; because, though you have a good opinion of the man, he is a stranger to you, you do not know him. So may they think well of Christ; but they will never commit themselves to him, seeing they know him not. But saving illumination carries the soul beyond opinion, to the certain knowledge of Christ and his excellency, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only—but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." The light of grace thus discovers the suitableness of the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections, and to the sinner's case. Hence the regenerate admire the glorious plan of salvation, through Christ crucified; rest their whole dependence upon it, heartily acquiesce therein; for whatever he is to others, he is to them, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." But unrenewed men, not seeing this, are offended in him: they will not venture their souls in that vessel—but betake themselves to the broken boards of their own righteousness. The same light convincingly discovers a superlative worth, a transcendent glory and excellence in Christ, which darkens all created excellencies—as the rising sun makes the stars hide their heads. It engages the "merchantman to sell all that he has, to buy the one pearl of great price," Matthew 12:45-46; makes the soul heartily content to take Christ for all, and instead of all. An unskillful merchant, to whom one offers a pearl of great price, for all his petty wares, dares not venture on the bargain; for though he thinks that one pearl may be worth more than all he has—yet he is not sure of it: but when a jeweler comes to him and assures him it is worth double all his wares, he then eagerly makes the bargain, and cheerfully parts with all he has, for that pearl.

Finally, this illumination in the knowledge of Christ, convincingly discovers to men a fullness in him, sufficient for the supply of all their needs, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. And they are persuaded that such fullness is in him, and that in order to be communicated: they depend upon it as a certain truth; and therefore, their souls take up their eternal rest in him.

(5.) The man is instructed in the knowledge of the vanity of the WORLD. Psalms 119:96, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Regenerating grace elevates the soul, translates it into the spiritual world, from whence this earth cannot but appear a little, yes, a very little thing; even as heaven appeared before, while the soul was groveling in the earth. Grace brings a man into a new world: where this earthly world is reputed but a stage of vanity, a howling wilderness, a valley of tears.

God has hung the sign of vanity at the door of all created enjoyments: yet how do men throng into the house, calling and looking for something that is satisfying; even after it has been a thousand times told them, that there is no such thing in it, it is not to be found there, Isaiah 57:10, "You are wearied in the greatness of your way: yet said you not, There is no hope." Why are men so foolish? The truth of the matter lies here—they do not see by the light of grace, they do not spiritually discern that sign of vanity. They have often, indeed, made a rational discovery of it: but can that truly wean the heart from the world? Nay, no more than painted fire can burn off the prisoner's bands. But the light of grace, is the light of life, powerful and efficacious.

(6.) To sum up all. In regeneration, the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things. 1 John 2:20, "You have an unction from the Holy One," that is, from Jesus Christ, Revelation 3:18. It is an allusion to the sanctuary, whence the holy oil was brought to anoint the priest, "and you know all things" necessary to salvation. Though men be not book-learned, if they are born again, they are Spirit-learned; for all such are taught of God, John 6:45. The Spirit of regeneration teaches them what they did not know before. And what they knew by the ear only, he teaches them over again as by the eye. The light of grace is an overcoming light, determining men to assent to divine truths on the mere testimony of God. It is no easy thing for the mind of man to acquiesce in divine revelation. Many pretend great respect to the Scriptures; whom, nevertheless, the clear Scripture testimony will not divorce from their preconceived opinions. But this illumination will make men's minds run, as willing captives, after Christ's chariot wheels, which they are ready to allow to drive over, and "cast down" their "imaginations, and every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Corinthians 10:5. It will bring them to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child," Mark 10:15, who thinks he has sufficient ground to believe anything—if his father do but say it is so.

2. The WILL is renewed. The Lord takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh, Ezekiel 36:26, and so from stones—he raises up children to Abraham. Regenerating grace is powerful and efficacious, and gives the will a new turn. It does not indeed force it—but sweetly, yet powerfully draws it, so that his people are willing in the day of his power, Psalms 110:3. There is heavenly oratory in the Mediators lips to persuade sinners, Psalms 45:2, "Grace is poured into your liPsalm" There are cords of a man, and bands of love in his hands, to draw them after him, Hosea 11:4. Love makes a net for elect souls, which will infallibly catch them, and bring them to land. The cords of Christ's love are strong cords: and they need to be so, for every sinner is heavier than a mountain of brass; and Satan, together with the heart itself, draws the contrary way. But love is strong as death; and the Lord's love to the soul he died for, is the strongest love; which acts so powerfully, that it must come off victorious.

(1.) The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good. While the opening of the prison to those who are bound, is proclaimed in the gospel, the Spirit of God comes and opens the prison door, goes to the prisoner, and, by the power of his grace, makes his chains fall off; breaks the bonds of iniquity, with which he was held in sin, so as he could neither will nor do anything truly good; and brings him forth into a large place, "working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Php 2:13. Then it is that the soul, that was fixed to the earth, can move heavenward; the withered hand is restored, and can be stretched out.

(2.) There is wrought in the will a fixed aversion to evil. In regeneration, a man gets a new spirit put within him, Ezekiel 36:26; and that spirit strives against the flesh, Galatians 5:17. The sweet morsel of sin, so greedily swallowed down—he now loathes, and would sincerely be rid of it, even as willingly as one who had drunk a cup of poison would vomit it up again. When the spring is stopped, the mud lies in the well unmoved; but when once the spring is cleared, the waters, springing up, will work the mud away by degrees. Even so, while a man continues in an unregenerate state, sin lies at ease in the heart; but as soon as the Lord strikes the rocky heart with the rod of his strength, in the day of conversion, grace is "in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," John 4:14, working away natural corruption, and gradually purifying the heart, Acts 15:9. The renewed will rises up against sin, strikes at the root thereof, and the branches too.

Lusts are now grievous, and the soul endeavors to starve them; the corrupt nature is the source of all evil, and therefore the soul will be often laying it before the great Physician. O, what sorrow, shame, and self-loathing fill the heart, in the day that grace makes its triumphant entrance into it! For now the madman has come to himself, and the remembrance of his follies cannot but cut him to the heart.

(3.) The will is endowed with an inclination, bent, and propensity to good. In its depraved state, it lay quite another way, being prone and bent to evil only: but now, by the operation of the omnipotent, all-conquering arm, it is drawn from evil to good, and gets another turn. As the former was natural, so this is natural too, in regard to the new nature given in regeneration, which has its holy strivings, as well as the corrupt nature has its sinful lustings, Galatians 5:17. The will, as renewed, points towards God and godliness. When God made man, his will, in respect of its intention, was directed towards God, as his chief end. In respect of its choice, it pointed towards that which God willed. When man unmade himself, his will was framed to the very reverse hereof: he made himself his chief end, and his own will his law. But when man is new made, in regeneration, grace rectifies this disorder in some measure, though not perfectly. because we are but renewed in part, while in this world. It brings back the sinner out of himself, to God, as his chief end, Psalms 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you." Php 1:21, "For me to live is Christ." It makes him to deny himself, and whatever way he turns, to point habitually towards God, who is the center of the gracious soul, its home, its "dwelling place in all generations," Psalms 90:1. By regenerating grace, the will is brought into a conformity to the will of God. It is conformed to his preceptive will, being endowed with holy inclinations, agreeable to every one of his commands. The whole law is impressed on the gracious soul: every part of it is written on the renewed heart. Although remaining corruption makes such blots in the writing, that oft-times the man himself cannot read it—yet he who wrote it can read it at all times; it is never quite blotted out, nor can be. What he has written, he has written; and it shall stand: "For this is the covenant - I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts," Hebrews 8:10. It is a covenant of salt, a perpetual covenant. By regenerating grace, the will is also conformed to his providential will; so that the man would no more be master of his own direction, nor carve out his lot for himself. He learns to say, from his heart, "The will of the Lord be done." "He shall choose our inheritance for us," Psalms 47:4. Thus the will is disposed to fall in with those things which, in its depraved state, it could never be reconciled to. Particularly,

[1.] The soul is reconciled to the covenant of peace. The Lord God proposes a covenant of peace to sinners, a covenant which he himself has framed, and registered in the Bible: but they are not pleased with it. Nay, unregenerate hearts cannot be pleased with it. Were it put into their hands to frame it according to their minds, they would blot many things out of it which God has put in, and put in many things which God has kept out. But the renewed heart is entirely satisfied with the covenant, 2 Samuel 23:5, "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Though the covenant could not be brought down to their depraved will, their will is, by grace, brought up to the covenant: they are well pleased with it; there is nothing in it which they would have out, nor is anything left out of it which they would have in.

[2.] The will is disposed to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. The soul is content to submit to him. Regenerating grace undermines, and brings down the towering imaginations of the heart, raised

up against its rightful Lord; it breaks the iron sinew, which kept the sinner from bowing to him; and disposes him to be no more stiff-necked—but to yield. He is willing to have on the yoke of Christ's commands, to take up the cross, and to follow him. He is content to take Christ on any terms, Psalms 110:3, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." The mind being savingly enlightened, and the will renewed, the sinner is thereby determined and enabled to answer the gospel call. So the chief work in regeneration is done; the fort of the heart is taken; there is room made for the Lord Jesus Christ in the inmost parts of the soul; the inner door of the will being now opened to him, as well as the outer door of the understanding. In one word, Christ is passively received into the heart; he is come into the soul, by his quickening Spirit, whereby spiritual life is given to the man, who in himself was dead in sin. His first vital act we may conceive to be an active receiving of Jesus Christ, discerned in his glorious excellencies; that is a believing on him, a closing with him, as discerned, offered and exhibited in the word of his grace, the glorious Gospel: the immediate effect of which is union with him, John 1:12-13, "To as many as received him to them gave he power," or privilege, "to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

Christ having taken the heart by storm, and triumphantly entered into it, in regeneration, the soul by faith yields itself to him, as it is expressed, 2 Chronicles 30:8. Thus, this glorious King who came into the heart, by his Spirit, dwells in it by faith. The soul, being drawn, runs; and being effectually called, comes.

3. In regeneration there is a happy change made on the AFFECTIONS; they are both rectified and regulated.

(1.) Regeneration rectifies the affections, placing them on suitable objects. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." The regenerate man's desires are rectified; they are set on God himself, and the things above. He, who before cried with the world, "Who will show us any good?" has changed his note, and says, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us," Psalms 4:6. Before, he saw no beauty in Christ, for which he was to be desired; but now Christ is all he desires, he is altogether lovely, Song of Solomon 5:16. The main stream of his desires is turned to run towards God; for there is the one thing he desires, Psalms 27:4.

He desires to be holy as well as happy; and rather to be gracious than great. His hopes, which before were low, and fastened down to things on earth—are now raised, and set on the glory which is to be revealed. He entertains the hope of eternal life, grounded on the word of promise, Titus 1:2. Which hope he has, as an anchor of the soul, fixing the heart under trials, Hebrews 6:19. It puts him upon purifying himself, even as God is pure, 1 John 3:3. For he is begotten again unto a lively hope, 1 Peter 1:3. His love is raised, and set on God himself, Psalms 18:1; on his holy law, Psalms 119:97. Though it strikes against his most beloved lust, he says, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," Romans 7:12. He loves the ordinances of God," Psalms 84:1, "How amiable are your tabernacles, O Lord Almighty!" Being passed from death unto life, he loves the brethren, 1 John 3:14, the people of God, as they are called, 1 Peter 2:10. He loves God for himself; and what is God's, for his sake. Yes, as being a child of God, he loves his own enemies. His heavenly Father is compassionate and benevolent; "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sends rain on the justand on the unjust:" therefore, he is in like manner

disposed, Matthew 5:44-45. His hatred is turned against sin—both in himself and others, Psalms 101:3, "I hate the work of those who turn aside, it shall not cleave to me." He groans under the body of it, and longs for deliverance, Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" His joys and delights are in God the Lord, in the light of his countenance, in his law, and in his people, because they are like him.

Sin is what he chiefly fears: it is a fountain of sorrow to him now, though formerly a spring of pleasure.

(2.) Regeneration regulates the affections, which are placed on SUITABLE objects. Our affections, when placed on the creature, are naturally exorbitant. When we joy in it, we are apt to overjoy; and when we sorrow, we are ready to sorrow overmuch: but grace bridles these affections, clips their wings, and keeps them within bounds, that they don't overflow all their banks. It makes a man "hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children; yes, and his own life also," comparatively; that is, to love them less than he loves God, Luke 14:26.

Grace also rectifies LAWFUL affections; bringing them forth from right principles, and directing them to right ends. There may be unholy desires after Christ and his grace; as when men desire Christ, not from any love to him—but merely out of love to themselves. "Give us of your oil," said the foolish virgins, "for our lamps are gone out," Matthew 25:8. There may be an unsanctified sorrow for sin; as when one sorrows for it, not because it is displeasing to God—but only because of the wrath annexed to it, as did Pharaoh, Judas, and others. So a man may love his father and mother from mere natural principles, without any respect to the command of God binding him thereto. But grace sanctifies the affections, in such cases, making them to run in a new channel of love to God, respect to his commands, and regard to his glory.

Again, grace raises the affections where they are too low. It gives the chief seat in them to God, and pulls down all other rivals, whether people or things, making them lie at his feet. Psalms 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you." He is loved for himself, and other people or things for his sake. What is lovely in them, to the renewed heart, is some ray of the divine goodness appearing in them: for unto gracious souls they shine only by borrowed light. This accounts for the saints loving all men; and yet hating those who hate God, and despising the wicked as vile people. They hate and despise them for their wickedness; there is nothing of God in that, and therefore nothing lovely nor honorable in it: but they love them for their commendable qualities or perfections, whether natural or moral; because, in whomever these things are, they are from God, and can be traced to him as their fountain.

Finally, regenerating grace sets the affections so firmly on God, that the man is disposed, at God's command, to leave his hold of everything else, in order to keep his hold of Christ; to hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ, Luke 14:26. It makes even lawful enjoyments, like Joseph's mantle to hang loose about a man, that he may leave them, when he is in danger of being ensnared by holding them.

If the stream of our affections has never been turned, we are, doubtless, going down the stream into the pit. If "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," have the throne in our hearts, which should be possessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; if we never had so much love to God, as to ourselves; if sin has been somewhat bitter to us—but never so bitter as

suffering, never so bitter as the pain of being weaned from it: truly we are strangers to this saving change of regeneration. For grace turns the affections upside down, whenever it comes into the heart.

4. The CONSCIENCE is renewed. As a new light is set up in the soul, in regeneration, conscience is enlightened, instructed and informed. That candle of the Lord, Proverbs 20:27, is now snuffed and brightened; so that it shines, and sends forth its light into the most retired corners of the heart: discovering sins which the soul was not aware of before; and, in a special manner, discovering the corruption or depravity of nature—that seed and spawn whence all actual sins proceed. This produces the new complaint, Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Conscience, which lay sleeping in the man’s bosom before, is now awakened, and makes its voice to be heard through the whole soul; therefore, there is no more rest for him in the sluggard’s bed; he must get up and be doing, arise, "haste, and escape for his life." It powerfully incites to obedience, even in the most spiritual acts, which lie not within the view of the natural conscience; and powerfully restrains from sin, even from those sins which do not lie open to the observation of the world. It urges the sovereign authority of God, to which the heart is now reconciled, and which it willingly acknowledges. And so it engages the man to his duty, whatever be the hazard from the world; for it fills the heart so with the fear of God—that the force of the fear of man is broken. This has engaged many to put their life in their hand, and follow the cause of Christ, which they once despised, and resolutely walk in the path they formerly abhorred, Galatians 1:23, "He who persecuted us in times past, now preaches the faith which once he destroyed."

Guilt now makes the conscience smart. It has bitter remorse for sins past—which fills the soul with anxiety, sorrow, and self-loathing. And every new reflection on these sins is apt to affect, and make its wounds bleed afresh with regret. It is made tender, in point of sin and duty, for the time to come: being once burnt, it dreads the fire, and fears to break the hedge where it was formerly bitten by the serpent.

Finally, the renewed conscience drives the sinner to Jesus Christ, as the only Physician who can draw out the sting of guilt; and whose blood alone can purge the conscience from dead works, Hebrews 9:14, refusing all ease offered to it from any other hand. This is an evidence that the conscience is not only awakened—as it may be in an unregenerate state; but oiled also, with regenerating grace.

5. As the MEMORY lacked not its share of depravity, it is also bettered by regenerating grace. The memory is weakened, with respect to those things that are not worth their room therein; and men are taught to forget injuries, and drop their resentments, Matthew 5:44-45, "Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you - that you may be," that is, appear to be, "the children of your Father who is in heaven."

It is strengthened for spiritual things. We have Solomon’s receipt for an ill memory, Proverbs 3:1, "My son," says he, "forget not my law." But how shall it be kept in mind? "Let your heart keep my commandments." Grace makes a heart-memory, even where there is no good head-memory, Psalms 119:11, "Your word have I hid in my heart." The heart, truly touched with the powerful sweetness of truth, will help the memory to retain what is so relished. If divine truths made deeper

impressions on our hearts, they would impress themselves with more force on our memories, Psalms 119:93, "I will never forget your precepts, for with them you have quickened me."

Grace sanctifies the memory. Many have large—but unsanctified memories, which serve only to gather knowledge, whereby to aggravate their condemnation: but the renewed memory serves to "remember his commandments—to do them," Psalms 103:18. It is a sacred storehouse, from whence a Christian is furnished in his way to Zion; for faith and hope are often supplied out of it, in a dark hour. It is the storehouse of former experiences; and these are the believer's way-marks, by noticing of which he comes to know where he is, even in a dark time. Psalms 42:6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember you from the land of Jordan," etc. It also helps the soul to godly sorrow and self-loathing, presenting old guilt anew before the conscience, and making it bleed afresh, though the sin be already pardoned; Psalms 25:7, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Where unpardoned guilt is lying on the sleeping conscience, it is often employed to bring in a word, which in a moment sets the whole soul on the stir; as when "Peter remembered the words of Jesus - he went out and wept bitterly," Matthew 26:75. The word of God laid up in a sanctified memory, serves a man to resist temptations, puts the sword in his hand against his spiritual enemies, and is a light to direct his steps in the way of true religion and righteousness.

6. There is a change made on the BODY, and the members thereof, in respect of their use; they are consecrated to the Lord. Even "the body is - for the Lord," 1 Corinthians 6:13. It is "the temple of the Holy Spirit," 1 Corinthians 6:19. The members thereof, which were formerly "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," become "instruments of righteousness unto God," Romans 6:13, "servants to righteousness unto holiness," Romans 6:19. The eye, that conveyed sinful imaginations into the heart, is under a covenant, Job 31:1, to do so no more; but to serve the soul, in viewing the works of God, and reading the word of God. The ear, that had often been death's porter, to let in sin, is turned to be the gate of life, by which the word of life enters the soul. The tongue, that set on fire the whole course of nature, is restored to the office it was designed for by the Creator; namely, to be an instrument of glorifying him, and setting forth his praise. In a word, the whole man is for God, in soul and body, which by this blessed change are made his.

7. This gracious change shines forth in the LIFE. Even the outward man is renewed. A new heart makes newness of life. When "the king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold," Psalms 45:13. "The single eye" makes "the whole body full of light," Matthew 6:22. This change will appear in every part of a man's life; particularly in the following things.

(1.) In the change of his COMPANY. Formerly, he despised the company of the saints—but now they are "the excellent, in whom is all his delight," Psalms 16:3. "I am a companion of all who fear you," says the royal psalmist, Psalms 119:63. A renewed man joins himself with the saints; for he and they are like-minded, in that which is their main work and business; they have all one new nature: they are all traveling to Immanuel's land, and converse together in the language of Canaan. In vain do men pretend to true religion, while ungodly company is their choice; for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Proverbs 13:20. Religion will make a man shy of throwing himself into an ungodly family, or any unnecessary familiarity with wicked men; as one who is healthy will beware of going into an infected house.

(2.) In his RELATIVE capacity, he will be a new man. Grace makes men gracious in their several relations, and naturally leads them to the conscientious performance of relative duties. It does not only make good men and good women—but makes good subjects, good husbands, good wives, children, servants, and, in a word, good relatives in the church, commonwealth, and family. It is a just exception made against the religion of many, namely, that they are bad relatives, they are bad husbands, wives, masters, servants, etc. How can we prove ourselves to be new creatures, if we be just such as we were before, in our different relations? 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Real godliness will gain a testimony to a man, from the consciences of his nearest relations; though they know more of his sinful infirmities than others do, as we see in the case, 2 Kings 4:1, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he did fear the Lord."

(3.) In the way of his following his worldly BUSINESS, there is a great change. It appears to be no more his all, as it was before. Though saints apply themselves to worldly business, as well as others—yet their hearts are not swallowed up in it. It is evident that they are carrying on a trade with heaven, as well as a trade with earth, Php 3:20, "For our conversation is in heaven." They go about their employment in the world, as a duty laid upon them by the Lord of all, doing their lawful business as the will of God, Ephesians 6:7, working, because he has said, "You shall not steal."

(4.) Such have a special concern for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world: they espouse the interests of religion, and "prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy," Psalms 137:6. However privately they live, grace gives them a public spirit, will concern itself in the ark and work of God, in the Gospel of God, and in the people of God, even in those of them whom they never saw. As children of God, they naturally care for these things. They have a new concern for the spiritual good of others: no sooner do they taste of the power of grace themselves—but they are inclined to set up to be agents for Christ and holiness in the world; as appears in the case of the woman of Samaria, who when Christ had manifested himself to her, "went her way into the city, and said unto the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John 4:28-29.

They have seen and felt the evil of sin, and therefore pity the world lying in wickedness. They would gladly pluck the brands out of the fire, remembering that they themselves were plucked out of it. They labor to commend religion to others, both by word and example; and rather deny themselves the liberty in indifferent things, than, by the uncharitable use of it, destroy others; 1 Corinthians 8:13, "Therefore, if meat make my brother to sin, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to sin."

(5.) In their use of LAWFUL COMFORTS, there is a great change. They rest not in them, as their end; but use them as means to help them in their way. They draw their satisfaction from the higher springs—even while lower springs are running. Thus Hannah, having obtained a son, rejoiced not so much in the gift, as in the giver, 1 Samuel 2:1, "And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord." Yes, when the comforts of life are gone, they can exist without them, and "rejoice in the Lord although the fig-tree do not blossom," Habakkuk 3:17-18.

Grace teaches to use the conveniences of the present life as pilgrims; and to show a holy moderation in all things. The heart, which formally reveled in these things without fear, is now shy of being over much pleased with them. Being apprehensive of danger, it uses them warily; as the dogs of Egypt run, while they lap their water out of the river Nile, for fear of the crocodiles that are in it.

(6.) This change shines forth in the man's performance of PIOUS DUTIES. He who lived in the neglect of them will do so no more, if once the grace of God enter into his heart. If a man be new-born, he will desire the sincere milk of the word 1 Peter 2:2-3. Whenever the prayerless person gets the Spirit of grace, he will be in him a Spirit of supplication, Zechariah 12:10. It is as natural for one that is born again to pray, as for the new-born babe to cry. Acts 9:11, "Behold, he prays!" His heart will be a temple for God, and his house a church. His devotion, which before was superficial and formal, is now spiritual and lively; for as much as heart and tongue are touched with a live coal from heaven: and he rests not in the mere performance of duties, as careful only to get his task done—but in every duty seeks communion with God in Christ; justly considering them as means appointed of God for that end, and reckoning himself disappointed if he miss of it.

Thus far of the NATURE of regeneration.

II. I come to show WHY this change is called regeneration, a being born again. It is so called, because of the resemblance between natural and spiritual birth, which lies in the following particulars.

1. Natural birth is a MYSTERIOUS thing: and so is spiritual birth. John 3:8, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof—but can not tell whence it comes and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The work of the Spirit is felt; but his way of working is a mystery we cannot comprehend. A new light is let into the mind, and the will is renewed; but how that light is conveyed there, how the will is fettered with cords of love, and how the rebel is made a willing captive—we can no more tell, than we can tell "how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child," Ecclesiastes 11:5. As a man hears the sound of the wind, and finds it stirring—but knows not where it begins, and where it ends, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He finds the change that is made upon him; but how it is produced he knows not. One thing he may know, that whereas he was blind, now he sees. But "the seed of grace" "springs and grows up—he knows not how," Mark 4:26-27.

2. In both, the creature comes to a being it had not before. The child is not, until it be born; and a man has no gracious being, no being in grace, until he is re-born. Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as "the quickening of a dead man," Ephesians 2:1-5. Man in his depraved state, is a mere nonentity in grace, and is brought into a new being by the power of Him "who calls things that are, not as though they were;" being "created in Jesus Christ unto good works," Ephesians 2:10. Therefore, our Lord Jesus, to give ground of hope to the Laodiceans, in their wretched and miserable state, proposes himself as "the beginning of the creation of God," Revelation 3:14, namely, the active beginning of it; "for all things were made by him" at first, John 1:3. From whence they might gather, that as he made them when they were nothing, he could make them over again, when worse than nothing; the same hand that made them his creatures, could make them new creatures.

3. As the child is PASSIVE in birth, so is the child of God in regeneration. The one contributes nothing to its own birth; neither does the other contribute anything, by way of efficiency, to its own regeneration: for though a man may lay himself down at the pool—yet he has no hand in moving the water, no power in performing the cure. One is born the child of a king, another the child of a beggar: the child has no hand at all in this difference. God leaves some in their depraved state; others he brings into a state of grace, or regeneracy. If you be thus honored, no thanks to you; for "who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive?" 1 Corinthians 4:7.

4. There is a wonderful combination of parts in both births. Admirable is the structure of man's body, in which there is such a variety of organs; nothing lacking, nothing superfluous. The psalmist, considering his own body, looks on it as a piece of marvelous work; "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," says he, Psalms 139:14, "and marvelously wrought in the womb," Psalms 139:15; where I know not how the bones grow, any more than I know what is doing in the lowest parts of the earth. In natural birth we are marvelously wrought, like a piece of needle-work; as the word imports: even so it is in regeneration. Psalms 45:14, "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work," raiment marvelously wrought. It is the same word in both texts. What that raiment is, the apostle tells us, Ephesians 4:24. It is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This is the raiment which he says, in the same place, we must put on; not excluding the imputed righteousness of Christ. Both are marvelously wrought, as masterpieces of the manifold wisdom of God. O the wonderful combination of graces in the new creature! O glorious creature, new-made after the image of God! It is grace for grace in Christ, which makes up this new man, John 1:16; even as in bodily birth, the child has member for member in the parent; has every member which the parent has in a certain proportion.

5. All this, in both cases, has its rise from that which is in itself very small and inconsiderable. O the power of God, in making such a creature of the corruptible seed, and much more in bringing forth the new creature from such small beginnings! It is as "the little cloud, like a man's hand," which spread, until "heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain," 1 Kings 18:44-45. A man gets a word from God at a sermon, which hundreds besides him hear, and let slip: but it remains with him, works in him, and never leaves him, until the little world is turned upside down by it; that is, until he becomes a new man. It is like the dream which got up into Ahasuerus's head, and cut off sleep from his eyes, Esther 6:1, which proved a spring of such motions as never ceased, until Mordecai, in royal pomp, was brought on horseback through the streets, proud Haman trudging at his foot; the same Haman afterwards hanged, Mordecai advanced, and the church delivered from Haman's hellish plot. "The grain of mustard seed becomes a tree," Matthew 13:31-32. God loves to bring great things out of small beginnings.

6. Natural birth is carried on by degrees. So is regeneration. It is with the soul, ordinarily, in regeneration, as with the blind man cured by our Lord, who first "saw men as trees walking," afterward "saw every man clearly," Mark 8:23-25. It is true, regeneration being, strictly speaking, a passage from death to life, the soul is quickened in a moment; like as when the embryo is brought to perfection in the womb, the soul is infused into the lifeless lump. Nevertheless, we may imagine somewhat like conception in spiritual regeneration, whereby the soul is prepared for quickening; and the new creature is capable of growth, 1 Peter 2:2, and of having life more abundantly, John 10:10.

7. In both there are new relations. The regenerate may call God, Father; for they are his children, John 1:12-13, "begotten of him," 1 Peter 1:3. The bride, the Lamb's wife, that is, the church, is their mother, Galatians 4:26. They are related, as brethren and sisters, to angels and glorified saints; "the family of heaven." They are of the heavenly stock: the lowest of them, "the base things of the world," 1 Corinthians 1:28, the kinless things, as the word imports, who cannot boast of the blood that runs in their veins, are yet, by their new birth, near of kin with the excellent in the earth.

8. There is a likeness between the parent and the child. Everything that generates, generates its like; and the regenerate are "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter 1:4. The moral perfections of the divine nature are, in measure and degree, communicated to the renewed soul: thus the divine image is restored; so that, as the child resembles the father, the new creature resembles God himself, being holy as he is holy.

9. As there is no birth without pain, both to the mother and to the child, so there is great pain in bringing forth the new creature. The children have more or less of these birth-pains, whereby they are "pricked in their heart," Acts 2:37. The soul has sore pains when under conviction and humiliation. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The mother is pained; "Zion travails," Isaiah 66:8. She sighs, groans, cries, and has hard labor, in her ministers and members—to bring forth children to her Lord, Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." Never was a mother more feelingly touched with "joy, that a child is born into the world," than she is upon the new birth of her children.

But, what is more remarkable than all this, we read not only of our Lord Jesus Christ's "travail," or toil "of soul," Isaiah 53:11—but, what is more directly to our purpose, of his "pains," or pangs, as of one travailing in childbirth; so the word used, Acts 2:24, properly signifies. Well might he call the new creature, as Rachel called her dear-bought son, Benoni, that is, the son of my sorrow; and as she called another, Naphtali, that is, my wrestling: for the pangs of that travail put him to "strong crying and tears," Hebrews 5:7; yes, into an "agony and bloody sweat," Luke 22:44. And in the end he died of these pangs; they became to him "the pains of death," Acts 2:24.

III. I shall now APPLY this doctrine.

Use 1. By what is said, you may try whether you are in the state of grace or not. If you are brought out of the state of wrath or ruin, into the state of grace or salvation, you are new creatures, you are born again.

Objection. But you will say, How shall we know whether we are born again, or not?

Answer. Were you to ask me, if the sun were risen, and how you should know whether it were risen or not? I would bid you look up to the heavens, and see it with your eyes. And, would you know if the light be risen in your heart? Look in, and see. Grace is light, and discovers itself.

Look into your mind, see if it has been illuminated in the knowledge of God. Have you been inwardly taught what God is? Were your eyes ever turned inward to see yourself; the sinfulness of your depraved state, the corruption of your nature; the sins of your heart and life? Were you ever led into a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Have your eyes seen King Jesus in his beauty; the manifold wisdom of God in him, his transcendent excellence, and absolute fullness and sufficiency, with the vanity and emptiness of all things else?

Next, What change is there on your will? Are the fetters taken off, wherewith it was formerly bound up from moving heavenward? Has your will got a new turn? Do you find an aversion to sin, and an inclination to good, wrought in your heart? Is your soul turned towards God, as your chief end? Is your will new-molded into some measure of conformity to the preceptive and providential will of God? Are you heartily reconciled to the covenant of peace, and fixedly disposed to the receiving of Christ, as he is offered in the gospel? And as to a change on your affections, are they rectified, and placed on right objects? Are your desires going out after God? Are they to his name, and the remembrance of him? Isaiah 26:8. Are your hopes in him? Is your love set upon him, and your hatred set against sin? Does your offending a good God affect your heart with sorrow, and do you fear sin more than suffering? Are your affections regulated? Are they, with respect to created comforts, brought down, as being too high; and with respect to God in Christ, raised up, as being too low? Has he the chief seat in your heart? And are all your lawful worldly comforts and enjoyments laid at his feet? Has your conscience been enlightened and awakened, refusing all ease—but from the application of the blood of a Redeemer? Is your memory sanctified, your body consecrated to the service of God? And are you now walking in newness of life? Thus you may discover whether you are born again or not.

But, for your farther help in this matter, I will discourse a little of another sign of regeneration, namely, the love of the brethren; an evidence whereby the weakest and most timorous saints have often had comfort, when they could have little or no consolation from other marks proposed to them. This the apostle lays down, 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is not to be thought that the apostle, by the brethren in this place means brethren by a common relation to the first Adam—but to the second Adam, Christ Jesus; because, however true it is, that universal benevolence, a good will to the whole race of mankind, takes place in the renewed soul, as being a lively lineament of the divine image—yet the whole context speaks of those that are "the sons of God," 1 John 3:1-2; "children of God," 1 John 3:10; "born of God," 1 John 3:9; distinguishing between "the children of God," and "the children of the devil," 1 John 3:10; between those that are "of the devil," 1 John 3:8, 1 John 3:12, and those that are "of God," 1 John 3:10. The text itself comes in as a reason why we should not marvel that the world hates the brethren, the children of God, 1 John 3:13. How can we marvel at it, seeing the love of the brethren is an evidence of one’s having passed from death to life? Therefore, it were absurd to look for that love among the men of the world, who are dead in trespasses and sins. They cannot love the brethren; no wonder, then, that they hate them. Wherefore it is plain, that by brethren here, are meant brethren by regeneration.

Now, in order to set this mark of regeneration in a true light, consider these three things.

1. This love to the brethren, is a love to them as such. Then do we love them in the sense of the text, when the grace, or image of God in them, is the chief motive of our love to them. When we love the godly for their godliness, the saints for their sanctity or holiness, then we love God in them, and so may conclude were born of God; for "every one that loves him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of him," 1 John 5:1. Hypocrites may love saints, on account of civil relations to them; because of their obliging conversation; for their being of the same opinion as to outward religious matters; and on many other such like accounts, whereby wicked men may be induced to love the godly. But happy they who love them merely for grace in them; for their heaven-born temper and disposition; who can pick this pearl even out of infirmities in and about them; lay hold

of it, and love them for it.

2. It is a love that will be given to all in whom the grace of God appears. Those who love one saint, because he is a saint, will have "love to all the saints," Ephesians 1:15. They will love all, who, in their view, bear the image of God. Those who cannot love a gracious person in rags—but confine their love to those who wear rich clothing, have not this love to the brethren in them. Those who confine their love to a church party, to whom God has not confined his grace, are souls too narrow to be put among the children. In whatever points men differ from us, in their judgment or way; yet if they appear to agree with us, in love to God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, and in bearing his image, we shall love them as brethren, if we are of the heavenly family.

3. If this love be in us, the more grace any person appears to be possessed of, he will be the more beloved by us. The more vehemently the holy fire of grace does flame in any, the hearts of true Christians will be the more warmed in love to them. It is not with the saints as with many other men, who make themselves the standards for others; and love them so far as they think they are like themselves. But, if they seem to outshine and darken them, their love is turned to hatred and envy, and they endeavor to detract from the due praise of their exemplary piety; because nothing is liked with them, in the practice of religion, that goes beyond their own measure; what of the life and power of religion appears in others, serves only to raise the serpentine grudge and envy in their pharisaical hearts. But as for those who are born again, their love and affection to the brethren bears proportion to the degrees of the divine image they discern in them.

01.03a Regeneration cont'd

Now, if you would improve these to the knowledge of your state, I would advise you,

1. To set apart some time, when you are at home, for a review of your case, to try your state by what has been said. Many have comfort and clearness as to their state, at a sermon, who in a little time lose it again; because while they hear the word preached, they make application of it; but do not consider these things more deliberately and leisurely when alone. The impression is too sudden and short to give lasting comfort; and it is often so inconsiderate, that it has bad consequences. Therefore, set about this work at home, after earnest and serious prayer to God for his help in it. Complain not of your lack of time while the night follows the busy day; nor of place, while fields and houses are to be got.

2. Renew your repentance before the Lord. Guilt lying on the conscience, unrepented of, may darken all your evidences and marks of grace. It provokes the Spirit of grace to withdraw; and when he goes, our light ceases. It is not a fit time for a saint to read his evidences, when the candle is blown out by some conscience-wounding guilt.

3. Exert the powers of the new nature; let the graces of the divine Spirit discover themselves in you by action. If you would know whether there is sacred fire in your bosom, or not, you must blow the coal; for although it exist, and be a live coal—yet if it be under the ashes, it will give you no light. Settle in your hearts a firm purpose, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to comply with every known duty, and watch against every known sin, having readiness of mind to be instructed in what you know not.

If gracious souls would thus manage their inquiries into their state, it is likely that they would have a comfortable outcome. And if others would take such a solemn review, and make trial of their state, impartially examining themselves before the tribunal of their consciences, they might have a timely discovery of their own sinfulness; but the neglect of self-examination leaves most men under sad delusions as to their state, and deprives many saints of the comfortable sight of the grace of God in them. But that I may afford some farther help to true Christians in their inquiries into their state, I shall propose and briefly answer some cases or doubts, which may possibly hinder some people from the comfortable view of their happy state. The children’s bread must not be withheld; though, while it is held forth to them, the dogs should snatch at it.

Case 1. "I doubt if I be regenerate, because I know not the precise time of my conversion; nor can I trace the particular steps of the way in which it was brought to pass."

Answer. Though it is very desirable to be able to give an account of the beginning, and the gradual advances, of the Lord’s work upon our souls, as some saints can distinctly do, the manner of the Spirit’s working being still a mystery—yet this is not necessary to prove the truth of grace. Happy he who can say, in this case, as the blind man in the Gospel, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." As, when we see flame, we know there is fire, though we know not how or when it began; so the truth of grace may be discerned in us, though we know not how or when it

was dropped into our hearts. If you can perceive the happy change which is wrought on your soul; if you find your mind is enlightened, your will inclined to comply with the will of God in all things; especially to fall in with the divine plan of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer; in vain do you trouble yourself, and refuse comfort, because you know not how and what way it was brought about.

Case 2. "If I were a new creature, sin could not prevail against me as it does."

Answer. Though we must not lay pillows for hypocrites to rest their heads upon, who indulge themselves in their sins, and make the doctrine of God’s grace subservient to their lusts, lying down contentedly in the bond of iniquity like men that are fond of golden chains; yet it must be owned, "the just man falls seven times a day;" and iniquity may prevail against the children of God. But if you are groaning under the weight of the body of death, the corruption of your nature; loathing yourself for the sins of your heart and life; striving to mortify your lusts; fleeing daily to the blood of Christ for pardon; and looking to his Spirit for sanctification: though you may be obliged to say with the Psalmist, "Iniquities prevail against me;" yet you may add with him, "As for our transgressions you shall purge them away," Psalms 65:3. The new creature does not yet possess the house alone: it dwells by the side of an ill neighbor, namely, remaining corruption, the relics of depraved nature. They struggle together for the mastery. "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," Galatians 5:17. And sometimes corruption prevails, bringing the child of God into captivity to the law of sin, Romans 7:23. Let not therefore the prevailing of corruption make you, in this case, conclude you are none of God’s children: but let it humble you, to be the more watchful, and to thirst the more intensely after Jesus Christ, his blood and Spirit; and that very disposition will evidence a principle of grace in you, which seeks the destruction of sin that prevails so often against you.

Case 3. "I find the motions of sin in my heart more violent since the Lord began his work on my soul, than they were before that time. Can this consist with a change of my nature?"

Answer. Dreadful is the case of many, who, after God has had a remarkable dealing with their souls, tending to their reformation, have thrown off all bonds, and have become grossly and openly immoral and profane; as if the devil had returned into their hearts with seven spirits worse than himself. All I shall say to such people is, that their state is exceedingly dangerous; they are in danger of sinning against the Holy Spirit: therefore, let them repent, before it be too late. But if it be not thus with you; though corruption is stirring itself more violently than formerly, as if all the forces of hell were raised, to hold fast, or bring back, a fugitive; yet these stirrings may consist with a change of your nature. When the restraint of grace is newly laid upon corruption, it is no wonder if it acts more vigorously than before, "warring against the law of the mind," Romans 7:23. The motions of sin may really be most violent, when the new principle is brought in to cast it out. The sun sending its beams through the window, discovers the motes in the house, and their motions, which were not seen before; so the light of grace may discover the risings and actings of corruption, in another manner than ever the man saw them before, though they really do not rise nor act more vigorously.

Sin is not quite dead in the regenerate soul; it is but dying, and dying a lingering death, being crucified: no wonder there are great fightings, when it is sick at the heart, and death is at the door. Besides, temptations may be more in number, and stronger, while Satan is striving to bring you

back, who are escaped, than while he only endeavored to retain you: "After you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of affliction," says the apostle to the Hebrews, Hebrews 10:32. But "cast not away your confidence," Hebrews 10:35. Remember his "grace is sufficient for you," and "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Pharaoh and his Egyptians never made such a formidable appearance against the Israelites, as at the Red Sea, after they were brought out of Egypt: but then were the pursuers nearest to a total overthrow, Exodus 14:1-31. Let not this case, therefore, make you raze the foundations of your trust; but be you emptied of self, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and you shall come off victorious.

Case 4. "But when I compare my love to God with my love to some created enjoyments, I find the pulse of my affections beat stronger to the creature than to the Creator. How then can I call him Father? Nay, alas! those turnings of heart within me, and glowings of affection to him, which I had, are gone; so that I fear all the love which I ever had to the Lord has been but a fit and flash of affection, such as hypocrites often have.

Answer. It cannot be denied, that the predominant love of the world is a certain mark of an unregenerate state, 1 John 2:15, "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Nevertheless, those are not always the strongest affections which are most violent. A man’s affections may be more moved, on some occasions, by an object that is little regarded, than by another that is exceedingly beloved; even as a little brook sometimes makes more noise than a great river. The strength of our affections is to be measured by the firmness and fixedness of the root, not by the violence of their actings.

Suppose a person meeting with a friend, who has been long abroad, finds his affections more vehemently acting towards his friend on that occasion, than towards his own wife and children; will he therefore say, that he loves his friend more than them? Surely not. Even so, although the Christian may find himself more moved in his love to the creature, than in his love to God; yet it is not therefore to be said, that he loves the creature more than God, seeing love to God is always more firmly rooted in a gracious heart, than love to any created enjoyment whatever: as appears when competition arises in such a manner, that the one or other is to be foregone. Would you, then, know your case? Retire into your own hearts, and there lay the two in the balance, and try which of them weighs down the other. Ask yourself, as in the sight of God, whether you would part with Christ for the creature, or part with the creature for Christ, if you were left to your choice in the matter? If you find your heart disposed to part with what is dearest to you in the world for Christ at his call, you have no reason to conclude you love the creature more than God; but, on the contrary, that you love God more than the creature, although you do not feel such violent motions in the love of God, as in the love of some created thing, Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father and mother - he cannot be my disciple." From which texts compared, we may infer, that he who hates, that is, is ready to part with, father and mother for Christ, is, in our Lord’s account, one that loves them less than him, and not one who loves father and mother more than him.

Moreover, you are to consider that there is a twofold love to Christ.

1. There is a SENSIBLE love to him, which is felt as a dart in the heart, and makes a holy love-sickness in the soul, arising from lack of enjoyment, as in that case of the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:8, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am sick of love:" or else from the fullness of it, as in Song of Solomon 2:5, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." These glowings of affection are usually wrought in young converts, who are ordinarily made "to sing in the days of their youth," Hosea 2:15.

While the fire-edge is upon the young convert, he looks upon others, reputed to be godly, and not finding them in such a temper or disposition as himself, he is ready to censure them; and to think there is far less religion in the world than indeed there is. But when his own cup comes to settle below the brim, and he finds that in himself which made him question the state of others, he is more humbled, and feels more and more the necessity of daily recourse to the blood of Christ for pardon, and to the Spirit of Christ for sanctification; and thus grows downwards in humiliation, self-loathing, and self-denial.

2. There is a RATIONAL love to Christ, which, without these sensible emotions felt in the former case, evidences itself by a dutiful regard to the divine authority and command. When one bears such a love to Christ, though the vehement stirrings of affection be lacking—yet he is truly tender of offending a gracious God; endeavors to walk before him unto all well pleasing; and is grieved at the heart for what is displeasing unto him, 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Now, although that sensible love does not always continue with you, you have no reason to deem it a hypocritical fit, while the rational love remains with you; any more than a loving and faithful wife needs question her love to her husband, when her fondness is abated.

Case 5. "The attainments of hypocrites and apostates are a terror to me, and come like a shaking storm on me, when I am about to conclude, from the marks of grace, which I seem to find in myself, that I am in the state of grace."

Answer. These things should, indeed, stir us up to a most serious and impartial examination of ourselves; but ought not to keep us in a continued suspense as to our state. Sirs, you see the outside of hypocrites, their duties, their gifts, their tears, and so on—but you see not their inside; you do not discern their hearts, the bias of their spirits. Upon what you see of them, you found a judgment of charity as to their state; and you do well to judge charitably in such a case, because you cannot know the secret springs of their actions: but you are seeking, and ought to have, a judgment of certainty as to your own state; and therefore are to look into that part of religion, which none in the world but yourselves can discern in you, and which you can as little see in others. A hypocrite’s region may appear far greater than that of a sincere soul: but that which makes the greatest figure in the eyes of men, is often of least worth before God. I would rather utter one of those groans which the apostle speaks of, Romans 8:26, than shed Esau’s tears, have Balaam’s prophetic spirit, or the joy of the stony-ground hearer. "The fire that shall try every man’s work," will try, not of what bulk it is—but "of what kind it is," 1 Corinthians 3:13. Though you may know what bulk of religion another has, and that it is more bulky than your own—yet God does not regard that; why, then, do you make such a matter of it? It is impossible for you, without divine revelation, certainly to know of what sort another man’s religion is: but you may certainly know what sort your

own is of, without extraordinary revelation; otherwise the apostle would not exhort the saints to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10. Therefore, the attainments of hypocrites and apostates should not disturb you, in your serious inquiry into your own state.

I will tell you two things, wherein the lowest saints go beyond the most refined hypocrites:

1. In denying themselves; renouncing all confidence in themselves, and their own works; acquiescing in, being well pleased with, and venturing their souls upon, God’s plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And, Matthew 11:6, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Php 3:3, "We are the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh."

2. In a real hatred of all sin; being willing to part with every lust, without exception, and to comply with every duty which the Lord makes, or shall make known to them, Psalms 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." Try yourselves by these.

Case 6. "I see myself fall so far short of the saints mentioned in the Scriptures, and of several excellent people of my own acquaintance, that, when I look on them, I can hardly look on myself as one of the same family with them."

Answer. It is, indeed, matter of humiliation, that we do not get forward to that measure of grace and holiness which we see is attainable in this life. This should make us more vigorously press towards the mark: but surely it is from the devil, that weak Christians make a rack for themselves, of the attainments of the strong. To yield to the temptation, is as unreasonable as for a child to dispute away his relation to his father, because he is not of the same stature with his elder brethren. There are saints of several sizes in Christ’s family; some fathers, some young men, and some little children, 1 John 2:13-14.

Case 7. "I never read in the word of God, nor did I ever know of a child of God, so TEMPTED, and so left of God, as I am; and therefore, no saint’s case being like mine, I can only conclude that I am none of their number.

Answer. This objection arises to some from their ignorance of the Scriptures, and the experience of Christians. It is profitable, in this case, to impart the matter to some experienced Christian friend, or to some godly minister. This has been a blessed means of peace to some people; while their case, which appeared to them to be singular, has been proved to have been the case of other saints. The Scriptures give instances of very horrid temptations, wherewith the saints have been assaulted. Job was tempted to blaspheme; this was the great thing the devil aimed at in the case of that great saint, Job 1:11, "He will curse you to your face." Job 2:9, "Curse God and die." Asaph was tempted to think it was in vain to be pious, which was in effect to throw off all religion, Psalms 73:13, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain." Yes, Christ himself was tempted to "cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple," and to "worship the devil," Matthew 4:6-9. And many of the children of God have not only been attacked with—but have actually yielded to very gross temptation for a time. Peter denied Christ, and cursed and swore that he knew him not, Mark 14:71. Paul, when a persecutor, compelled even saints to blaspheme, Acts 26:10-11.

Many of the saints can, from their sad experience, bear witness to very gross temptations, which have astonished their spirits, made their very flesh to tremble, and sickened their bodies. Satan's fiery darts make terrible work; and will cost some pains to quench them, by a vigorous managing of the shield of faith, Ephesians 6:16. Sometimes he makes such desperate attacks, that never was one more put to it, in running to and fro; without intermission, to quench the fire-balls incessantly thrown into his house by an enemy, designing to burn the house about him, than the poor tempted saint is, to repel Satanical injections. But these injections, these horrid temptations, though they are a dreadful affliction, they are not the sins of the tempted, unless they make them theirs by consenting to them. They will be charged upon the tempter alone, if they be not consented to; and will no more be laid to the charge of the tempted party, than a bastard's being laid down at a chaste man's door will fix guilt upon him. But suppose neither minister nor private Christian, to whom you go, can tell you of any who has been in your case; yet you ought not thence to infer that your case is singular, far less to give up hope: for it is not to be thought, that every godly minister, or private Christian, has had experience of all the cases which a child of God may be in. We need not doubt that some have had distresses known only to God and their own consciences; and so to others these distresses are as if they had never been. Yes, and though the Scriptures contain suitable directions for every case which a child of God can be in, and these illustrated with a sufficient number of examples; yet it is not to be imagined that there are in the Scriptures perfect instances of every particular case incident to the saints. Therefore, though you cannot find an instance of your case in the Scripture—yet bring your case to it, and you shall find suitable remedies prescribed there for it.

Study rather to make use of Christ for your case, who has a remedy for all diseases, than to know if ever any was in your case. Though one should show you an instance of your case, in an undoubted saint; yet none could promise that it would certainly give you ease: for a scrupulous conscience would readily find out some difference. And if nothing but a perfect conformity of another's case to yours will satisfy, it will be hard, if not impossible, to satisfy you; for it is with people's cases, as with their natural faces: though the faces of all men are of one make, and some are so very like others, that, at first view, we are ready to take them for the same; yet if you view them more accurately, you will see something in every face, distinguishing it from all others; though possibly you cannot tell what it is. Therefore I conclude, that if you can find in yourselves the marks of regeneration, proposed to you from the word, you ought to conclude you are in the state of grace, though your case were singular, which is indeed unlikely.

Case 8. "The AFFLICTIONS I meet with are strange and unusual. I doubt if ever a child of God was tried with such dispensations of providence as I am."

Answer. Much of what was said on the preceding case, may be helpful in this. Holy Job was assaulted with this temptation, Job 5:1, "To which of the saints will you turn?" But he rejected it, and held fast his integrity. The apostle supposes that Christians may be tempted to "think it strange concerning the fiery trial," 1 Peter 4:12. But they have need of larger experience than Solomon's, who will venture to say, "See this is new," Ecclesiastes 1:10. What though, in respect of the outward dispensations of providence, "it happen to you according to the work of the wicked?" yet you may be just notwithstanding; according to Solomon's observation, Ecclesiastes 8:14. Sometimes we travel in ways where we can neither perceive the prints of the foot of man or beast; yet we cannot from thence conclude that there was never any there before us: so, though

you can not perceive the footsteps of the flock, in the way of your affliction, you must not therefore conclude that you are the first that ever traveled that road. But what if it were so? Some one saint or other must be first, in drinking of each bitter cup the rest have drunk of. What warrant have you or I to limit the Holy One of Israel to one trodden path, in his dispensations towards us? "Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters; and your footsteps are not known," Psalms 77:19. If the Lord should carry you to heaven by some retired road, so to speak, you would have no ground of complaint. Learn to allow sovereignty a latitude; be at your duty; and let no affliction cast a veil over any evidences you otherwise have for your being in the state of grace: for "no man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him," Ecclesiastes 9:1.

Use 2. You who are strangers to this new birth, be convinced of the absolute necessity of it. Are all who are in the state of grace born again? then you have neither part nor lot in it, who are not born again. I must tell you in the words of our Lord and Savior, and O that he would speak them to your hearts! "You must be born again," John 3:7. For your conviction, consider these few things.

1. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you to do anything really good and acceptable to God. While you are not born again, your best works are but glittering sins; for though the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the performance. Consider,

(1.) That without regeneration there is no faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God," Hebrews 11:6. Faith is a vital act of the new-born soul. The evangelist, showing the different treatment which our Lord Jesus had from different people, some receiving him, some rejecting him, points at regenerating grace as the true cause of that difference, without which, never any one would have received him. He tells us, that "as many as received him," were those "who were born - of God," John 1:11-13. Unregenerate men may presume; but true faith they cannot have. Faith is a flower that grows not in the field of nature. As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part.

(2.) Without regeneration a man’s works are dead works. As is the principle, so must the effects be: if the lungs are rotten, the breath will be unsavoury; and he who at best is dead in sin, his works at best will be but dead works. "Unto those who are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure - being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate," Titus 1:15-16. Could we say of a man, that he is more blameless in his life than any other in the world; that he reduces his body with fasting; and has made his knees as hard as horns with continual praying; but he is not born again: that exception would mar all. As if one should say, There is a well proportioned body—but the soul is gone; it is but a dead lump. This is a melting consideration. You do many things materially good; but God says, All these things avail not—as long as I see the old nature reigning in the man. Galatians 6:15, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision—but a new creature."

If you are not born again,

(1.) All your REFORMATION is nothing in the sight of God. You have shut the door—but the thief is still in the house. It may be you are not what once you were; yet you are not what you must be, if ever you would see heaven; for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3.

(2.) Your PRAYERS are an "abomination to the Lord," Proverbs 15:8. It may be, others admire your seriousness; you cry as for your life; but God accounts of the opening of your mouth, as one would account of the opening of a grave full of rottenness, Romans 3:13, "Their throat is an open sepulcher." Others are affected with your prayers; which seem to them, as if they would rend the heavens; but God accounts them but as the howling of a dog: "They have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds," Hosea 7:14. Others take you for a wrestler and prevailer with God; but he can take no delight in you nor your prayers, Isaiah 66:3, "Their offerings will not be accepted. When such people sacrifice an ox, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb or bring an offering of grain, it is as bad as putting a dog or the blood of a pig on the altar! When they burn incense, it is as if they had blessed an idol." Why, because you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity!"

(3.) All you have DONE for God, and his cause in the world, though it may be followed with temporal rewards—yet it is lost as to divine acceptance. This is clear from the case of Jehu, who was indeed rewarded with a kingdom, for his executing due vengeance upon the house of Ahab; as being a work good for the matter of it, because it was commanded of God, as you may see, 2 Kings 9:7; yet was he punished for it in his posterity, because he did it not in a right manner, Hosea 1:4, "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." God looks chiefly to the heart: and if so, truly, though the outward appearance be fairer than that of many others—yet the hidden man of your heart is loathsome; you look well before men—but are not, as Moses was, fair to God, as the margin has it, Acts 7:20. O, what a difference is there between the characters of Asa and Amaziah! "The high places were not removed; nevertheless, Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days," 1 Kings 15:14. "Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—but not with a perfect heart," 2 Chronicles 25:2. It may be you are zealous against sin in others, and do admonish them of their duty, and reprove them for their sin; and they hate you, because you do your duty: but I must tell you, God hates you too, because you do it not in a right manner; and that you can never do, while you are not born again.

(4.) All your STRUGGLES AGAINST SIN in your own heart and life, are nothing. The proud Pharisee afflicted his body with fasting, and God struck his soul, in the mean time, with a sentence of condemnation, Luke 18:1-43. Balaam struggled with his covetous temper, to that degree, that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness—yet he would not win them by cursing Israel: but he died the death of the wicked, Numbers 31:8. All you do, while in an unregenerate state, is for yourself: therefore, it will fare with you as with a subject, who having reduced the rebels, puts the crown on his own head, and loses all his good service and his head too.

Objection. "If it be thus with us, then we need never perform any religious duty at all."

Answer. The conclusion is not just. No inability of yours can excuse from the duty which God’s law lays on you: and there is less evil in doing your duty, than there is in the omission of it. But there is a difference between omitting a duty, and doing it as you do it. A man orders the masons to build him a house. If they quite neglect the work, that will not be accepted; if they build on the old rotten foundation, neither will that please: but they must raze the foundation, and build on firm ground. "Go and do likewise." In the mean time, it is not in vain even for you to seek the Lord: for though he regards you not—yet he may have respect to his own ordinances, and do you good thereby, as was said before.

2. Without regeneration there is no communion with God. There is a society on earth, whose "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John 1:3. But out of that society, all the unregenerate are excluded; for they are all enemies to God, as you heard before at large. Now, "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. They are all unholy: and "what communion has light with darkness - Christ with Belial?" 2 Corinthians 6:14-15. They may have a show and semblance of holiness; but they are strangers to true holiness, and therefore "without God in the world." How sad is it, to be employed in religious duties—yet to have no fellowship with God in them! You would not be content with your food, unless it nourished you; nor with your clothes, unless they kept you warm: and how can you satisfy yourselves with your duties, while you have no communion with God in them?

3. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you for heaven. None go to heaven but those who are made meet for it, Colossians 1:12. As it was with Solomon's temple, 1 Kings 6:7, so is it with the temple above. It is "built of stone made ready before it is brought there;" namely, of "living stones," 1 Peter 2:5, "wrought for the selfsame thing," 2 Corinthians 5:5; for they cannot be laid in that glorious building just as they come out of the quarry of depraved nature. Jewels of gold are not fit for swine, and far less jewels of glory for unrenewed sinners. Beggars, in their rags, are not fit for kings' houses; nor sinners to enter into the King's palace, without the raiment of needlework, Psalms 45:14-15. What wise man would bring fish out of the water to feed in his meadows? or send his oxen to feed in the sea? Just as little are the unregenerate fit for heaven, or heaven fit for them. It would never be relished by them. The unregenerate would find fault with heaven on several accounts. As,

(1.) That it is a strange country. Heaven is the renewed man's native country: his Father is in heaven; his mother is Jerusalem, which is above, Galatians 4:26. He is born from above, John 3:3. Heaven is his home, 2 Corinthians 5:1; therefore, he looks on himself as a stranger on this earth, and his heart is homeward, Hebrews 11:16, "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly country." But the unregenerate man is the man of the earth, Psalms 10:18; written in the earth, Jeremiah 17:13. Now, "Home is home, be it ever so homely:" therefore, he minds earthly things, Php 3:19. There is a peculiar sweetness in our native soil; and with difficulty are men drawn to leave it, and dwell in a strange country. In no case does that prevail more than in this; for unrenewed men would forfeit their pretensions to heaven, were it not that they see they cannot make a better bargain.

(2.) There is nothing in heaven that they delight in, as agreeable to the carnal heart, Revelation 21:27, "For there shall never enter into it anything that defiles." When Mahomet explained his paradise to be a place of sensual delights, his religion was greedily embraced; for that is the heaven men naturally choose. If the covetous man could get bags full of gold there, and the voluptuous man could promise himself his sensual delights, they might be reconciled to heaven, and fitted for it too; but since it is not so, though they may utter fair words about it, truly it has little of their hearts.

(3.) Every corner there is filled with that which of all things they have the least liking for; and that is holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness. Were one who abhors swine's flesh, bidden to a feast where all the dishes were of that sort of meat—but variously prepared, he would find fault with every dish at the table, notwithstanding all the art used to make them palatable. It is true, there is

joy in heaven—but it is holy joy; there are pleasures in heaven—but they are holy pleasures; there are places in heaven—but it is holy ground: that holiness which in every place, and in everything there—would mar all to the unregenerate.

(4.) Were they carried there, they would not only change their place, which would be a great heart-break—but they would change their company too. Truly, they would never like the company there, who care not for communion with God here; nor value the fellowship of his people, at least in the vitals of practical godliness. Many, indeed, mix themselves with the godly on earth, to procure a name to themselves, and to cover the sinfulness of their hearts; but that trade cannot be managed there.

(5.) They would never like the employment of heaven, they care so little for it now. The business of the saints there would be an intolerable burden to them, seeing it is not agreeable to their nature. To be taken up in beholding, admiring, and praising him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb, would be work unsuitable, and therefore unsavoury to an unrenewed soul.

(6.) They would find this fault with it, that the whole is of everlasting continuance. This would be a killing ingredient in it to them. How would such as now account the Sabbath day a burden, brook the celebration of an everlasting Sabbath in the heavens!

4. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to your being admitted into heaven, John 3:3. No heaven without it. Though carnal men could digest all those things which make heaven so unsuitable for them—yet God will never bring them there. Therefore, born again you must be, else you shall never see heaven; you shall perish eternally. For,

(1.) There is a bill of exclusion against you in the court of heaven, and against all of your sort; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3. Here is a bar before you, that men and angels cannot remove. To hope for heaven, in the face of this peremptory sentence, is to hope that God will recall his word, and sacrifice his truth and faithfulness to your safety; which is infinitely more than to hope that "the earth shall be forsaken for you, and the rock removed out of its place."

(2.) There is no holiness without regeneration. It is "the new man which is created in true holiness," Ephesians 4:24. And no heaven without holiness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14. Will the gates of pearl be opened, to let in dogs and swine? No; their place is outside, Revelation 22:15. God will not admit such into the holy place of communion with him here; and will he admit them into the holiest of all hereafter? Will he take the children of the devil, and permit them to sit with him in his throne? Or, will he bring the unclean into the city, whose street is pure gold? Be not deceived; grace and glory are but two links of one chain, which God has joined, and no man shall put asunder. None are transplanted into the paradise above—but out of the nursery of grace below. If you are unholy while in this world, you will be forever miserable in the world to come.

(3.) All the unregenerate are without Christ, and therefore have no hope while in that case, Ephesians 2:12. Will Christ prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive him into their hearts? Nay, "Since you neglected all my counsel and did not accept my correction, I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and stress overcome you. Proverbs

(4.) There is an infallible connection between a finally unregenerate state and damnation, arising from the nature of the things themselves; and from the decree of heaven which is fixed and immovable, as mountains of brass, John 3:3; Romans 8:6, "To be carnally minded is death." An unregenerate state is hell in the bud. It is eternal destruction in embryo, growing daily, though you do not discern it. Death is painted on many a fair face, in this life. Depraved nature makes men fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the damned, in utter darkness.

[1.] The heart of stone within you, is a sinking weight. As a stone naturally goes downward, so the hard stony heart tends downward to the bottomless pit. You are hardened against reproof; though you are told your danger—yet you will not see it, you will not believe it. But remember that the conscience being now seared with a hot iron, is a sad presage of everlasting burnings.

[2.] Your unfruitfulness under the means of grace, fits you for the axe of God's judgments, Matthew 3:10, "Every tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The withered branch is fuel for the fire, John 15:6. Tremble at this, you despisers of the Gospel: if you be not thereby made fit for heaven, you will be like the barren ground, bearing briers and thorns, "near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," Hebrews 6:8.

[3.] The hellish dispositions of mind, which discover themselves in profanity of life, fit the guilty for the regions of horror. A profane life will have a miserable end. "Those who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Galatians 5:19-21. Think on this, you prayerless people, you mockers of religion, you cursers and swearers, you unclean and unjust people, who have not so much as moral honesty to keep you from lying, cheating, and stealing. What sort of a tree do you think it is, upon which these fruits grow? Is it a tree of righteousness, which the Lord has planted? Or is it not such a one as cumbers the ground, which God will pluck up for fuel to the fire of his wrath?

[4.] Your being dead in sin, makes you fit to be wrapped in flames of brimstone, as a winding-sheet; and to be buried in the bottomless pit, as in a grave. Great was the cry in Egypt, when the first-born in each family was dead; but are there not many families, where all are spiritually dead together? Nay, many there are who are twice dead, plucked up by the root. Sometimes in their life they have been roused by apprehensions of death, and its consequences; but now they are so far on in their way to the land of darkness, that they hardly ever have the least glimmering of light from heaven.

[5.] The darkness of your minds presages eternal darkness. O, the horrid ignorance with which some are plagued; while others, who have got some rays of the light of reason in their heads, are utterly void of spiritual light in their hearts! If you knew your case, you would cry out, Oh! darkness! darkness! darkness! making way for the blackness of darkness forever! The face-covering is upon you already, as condemned people; so near are you to everlasting darkness. It is only Jesus Christ who can stop the execution, pull the napkin off the face of the condemned malefactor, and put a pardon in his hand; Isaiah 25:7, "He will destroy, in this mountain, the face of covering cast over all people," that is, the face-covering cast over the condemned, as in Haman's case, Esther 7:8, "As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face."

[6.] The chains of darkness you are bound with in the prison of your depraved state, Isaiah 61:1, fits you to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Ah, miserable men! Sometimes their consciences stir within them, and they begin to think of amending their ways. But alas! they are in chains, they cannot do it. They are chained by the heart: their lusts cleave so fast to them, that they cannot, nay, they will not shake them off. Thus you see what affinity there is between an unregenerate state, and the state of the damned, the state of absolute and irretrievable misery. Be convinced, then, that you must be born again; put a high value on the new birth, and eagerly desire it. The text tells you, that the word is the seed, whereof the new creature is formed: therefore, take heed to it, and entertain it, as it is your life. Apply yourself to the reading of the Scriptures. You who cannot read, get others to read it to you. Wait diligently on the preaching of the word, as by divine appointment the special mean of conversion; "for - it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe," 1 Corinthians 1:21. Therefore cast yourselves in Christ's way; reject not the means of grace, lest you be found to judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Attend carefully to the word preached. Hear every sermon, as if you were hearing for eternity; take heed that the fowls of the air steal away this seed from you, as it is sown. "Give yourself wholly to it," 1 Timothy 4:15. "Receive it not as the word of men—but, as it is in truth, the word of God," 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Hear it with application, looking on it as a message sent from heaven, to you in particular; though not to you only, Revelation 3:22, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches." Lay it up in your hearts; meditate upon it; and be not as the unclean beasts, which chew not the cud. But by earnest prayer, beg that the dew of Heaven may fall on your heart, that the seed may spring up there.

More particularly,

(1.) Receive the testimony of the word of God, concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration.

(2.) Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just One he is.

(3.) Examine your ways by it; namely, the thoughts of your heart, the expressions of your lips, and the tenor of your life. Look back through the several periods of your life; and see your sins from the precepts of the word, and learn, from its threatening, what you are liable to on account of these sins.

(4.) By the help of the same word of God, view the corruption of your nature, as in a mirror which manifests our ugly face in a clear manner. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that fear and sorrow, on account of your soul's state, which are necessary to prepare and stir you up to look after a Savior. Fix your thoughts upon him offered to you in the Gospel, as fully suited to your case; having, by his obedience unto death, perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope and faith; and move you to stretch out the withered hand unto him, at his own command.

Let these things sink deeply into your hearts, and improve them diligently. Remember, whatever you are, you must be born again; else it had been better for you, that you had never been born. Therefore, if any of you shall live and die in an unregenerate state, you will be inexcusable, having been fairly warned of your danger.

01.03b MYSTICAL UNION between Christ and Believers

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732)

I. The State of INNOCENCE II. The State of NATURE 1. The SINFULNESS of man’s natural state 2. The MISERY of man’s natural state 3. The INABILITY of man’s natural state III. The State of GRACE

1. Regeneration 2. MYSTICAL UNION between Christ and Believers

"I am the vine you are the branches." John 15:5

Having spoken of the change made by regeneration, on all those who will inherit eternal life, in opposition to their natural real state, the state of degeneracy; I proceed to speak of the change made on them, in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to their natural relative state, the state of misery. The doctrine of the saints’ union with Christ, is very plainly and fully insisted on, from the beginning to the eighth verse of this chapter; which is a part of our Lord’s farewell sermon to his disciples. Sorrow had now filled their hearts; they were apt to say, Alas! what will become of us, when our Master is taken from our head? Who will then instruct us? Who will solve our doubts? How shall we be supported under our difficulties and discouragements? How shall we be able to live without our accustomed communication with him? Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ seasonably teaches them the mystery of their union with him, comparing himself to the vine, and them to the branches.

1. He compares himself to a VINE. "I am the vine." He had been celebrating, with his disciples, the sacrament of his supper, that sign and seal of his people’s union with him; and had told them, "That he would drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until he should drink it new with them in his Father’s kingdom:" and now he shows himself to be the vine, from whence the wine of their consolation should come. The vine has less beauty than many other trees—but it is exceedingly fruitful; fitly representing the low condition in which our Lord was in, bringing many sons to glory. But that which is chiefly aimed at, in his comparing himself to a vine, is to represent himself as the supporter and nourisher of his people, in whom they live and bring forth fruit.

2. He compares them to BRANCHES; you are the branches of that vine. You are the branches knit to, and growing on this stock, drawing all your life and sap from it. It is a beautiful comparison; as if he had said, I am as a vine, you are as the branches of that vine. Now there are two sorts of branches. (1.) Natural branches, which at first spring out of the stock. These are the branches that are in the tree, and were never out of it. (2.) There are engrafted branches, which are branches cut off from the tree that first gave them life, and put into another, to grow upon it. Thus branches come to be on a tree, which originally were not on it. The branches mentioned in the text, are of the latter sort; branches broken off, as the word in the original language denotes, namely, from the tree which first gave them life. None of the children of men are natural branches of the second Adam, that is, Jesus Christ, the true vine; they are the natural branches of the first Adam, that degenerate vine: but the elect are all of them, sooner or later, broken off from their natural stock,

and engrafted into Christ, the true vine.

DOCTRINE. They who are in the state of grace, are engrafted in, and united to, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taken out of their natural stock, cut off from it; and are now engrafted into Christ, as the new stock. In general, for understanding the union between the Lord Jesus Christ and his elect, who believe in him, and on him, I observe,

1. It is a SPIRITUAL union. Man and wife, by their marriage-union, become one flesh; Christ and true believers, by this union, become one spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:17. As one soul or spirit actuates both the head and the members in the natural body, so the one Spirit of God dwells in Christ and the Christian; for, "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Romans 8:9. Earthly union is made by contact; so the stones in a building are united: but this is a union of another nature. Were it possible that we could eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, in a corporeal and carnal manner, it would profit nothing, John 6:63. It was not Mary's bearing him in her womb—but her believing on him, that made her a saint, Luke 11:27-28, "A woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

2. It is a REAL union. Such is our weakness in our present state, so much are we sunk in sin, that in our mind, we are prone to suspect spiritual realities to be only a fiction. But nothing is more real than what is spiritual: as approaching nearest to the nature of him who is the fountain of all reality, namely, God himself. We do not see with our eyes the union between our own soul and body; neither can we represent it to ourselves truly, by imagination, as we do sensible things: yet the reality of it is not to be doubted. Faith is no fancy—but "the substance of things hoped for," Hebrews 11:1. Neither is the union thereby made between Christ and believers imaginary—but most real: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Ephesians 5:30.

3. It is a most close and INTIMATE union. Believers, regenerate people, who believe in him, and rely on him, have put on Christ, Galatians 3:27. If that be not enough, he is in them, John 17:23, formed in them as the child in the womb, Galatians 4:19. He is the foundation, 1 Corinthians 3:11; they are the living stones built upon him, 1 Peter 2:5. He is the head, and they the body, Ephesians 1:22-23. Nay, he lives in them, as their very souls live in their bodies, Galatians 2:20. And what is more than all this, they are one in the Father and the Son, as the Father is in Christ, and Christ in the Father, John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us."

4. Though it is not a mere LEGAL union—yet it is a union supported by law. Christ, as the surety, and Christians as the principal debtors, are one in the eye of the law. When the elect had run themselves, with the rest of mankind, in debt to the justice of God, Christ became surety for them, and paid the debt. When they believe on him, they are united to him in a spiritual marriage union; which takes effect so far, that what he did and suffered for them is reckoned in law, as if they had done and suffered it themselves. Hence, they are said to be crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20; buried with him, Colossians 2:12; yes, raised up together, namely, with Christ, "and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Ephesians 2:6. In which places, saints on earth, of whom the apostle there speaks, cannot be said to be sitting—but in the way of law reckoning.

5. It is an INDISSOLUBLE union. Once in Christ, ever in him. Having taken up his habitation in the heart, he never leaves. None can untie this happy knot. Who will dissolve this union? Will he himself? No, he will not; we have his word for it; "I will not turn away from them," Jeremiah 32:40. But perhaps the sinner will do this mischief to himself? No, he shall not; "they shall not depart from me," says their God. Can devils do it? No, unless they be stronger than Christ and his Father too; "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," says our Lord, John 10:28. "And none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John 10:30. But what say you of death, which parts husband and wife; yes, separates the soul from the body? Will not death do it? No: the apostle, Romans 8:38-39, is "persuaded that neither death," terrible as it is, "nor life," desirable as it is; "nor" devils, those evil "angels, nor" the devil's persecuting agents, though they be "principalities, nor powers" on earth; "nor" evil "things present," already lying on us; "nor" evil "things to come" on us; "nor" the "height" of worldly felicity; "nor depth" of worldly misery; "nor any other creature," good or evil, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." As death separated Christ's soul from his body—but could not separate either his soul or body from his divine nature; so, though the saints should be separated from their nearest relations in the world, and from all their earthly enjoyments; yes, though their souls should be separated from their bodies separated in a thousand pieces, their "bones scattered, as one cuts or cleaves wood;" yet soul and body shall remain united to the Lord Christ; for even in death, "they sleep in Jesus," 1 Thessalonians 4:14; and "he keeps all their bones," Psalms 34:20. Union with Christ, is "the grace wherein we stand," firm and stable, "as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed."

6. It is a MYSTERIOUS union. The gospel is a doctrine of mysteries. It discovers to us the substantial union of the three persons in one Godhead, 1 John 5:7, "These three are one;" the hypostatic union, of the divine and human natures, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Timothy 3:16, "God was manifest in the flesh;" and the mystical union, between Christ and believers; "This is a great mystery" also, Ephesians 5:32. O, what mysteries are here! The head in heaven, the members on earth—yet really united! "Christ in the believer, living in him, walking in him:" and "the believer dwelling in God, putting on the Lord Jesus, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood!" This makes the saints a mystery to the world; yes, a mystery to themselves.

I come now more particularly to speak of this union with, and engrafting into, Jesus Christ.

I. I shall consider the natural stock, which the branches are taken out of.

II. The supernatural stock they are engrafted into.

III. What branches are cut off the old stock, and put into the new.

IV. How it is done. And, V. The benefits flowing from this union and engrafting.

I. Let us take a view of the natural stock, which the branches are taken out of. The two Adams, that is, Adam and Christ, are the two stocks: for the Scripture speaks of these two, as if there had been no more men in the world than they, 1 Corinthians 15:45, "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit;" 1 Corinthians 15:47, "The first man is of the earth earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." And the reason is, there never were any that were not branches of one of these two; all men being either in the one stock or in the other: for in these two sorts all mankind stand divided, 1 Corinthians 15:48, "As is the earthy, such are they also which are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The first

Adam then, is the natural stock: on this stock are the branches found growing at first, which are afterwards cut off, and engrafted into Christ. As for the fallen angels, as they had no relation to the first Adam, so they have none to the second.

There are four things to be remembered here.

(1.) That all mankind, the man Christ excepted, are naturally branches of the first Adam, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men."

(2.) The bond which knit us unto the natural stock, was the covenant of works. Adam, being our natural root, was made the moral root also, bearing all his posterity, as representing them in the covenant of works. For "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," Romans 5:19. It was necessary that there should be a peculiar relation between that one man and the many, as a foundation for imputing his sin to them. This relation did not arise from the mere natural bond between him and us, as a father to his children; for so we are related to our immediate parents, whose sins are not thereupon imputed to us, as Adam's sin is: but it arose from a moral bond between Adam and us; the bond of a covenant, which could be no other than the covenant of works, wherein we are united to him, as branches to a stock. Hence Jesus Christ, though a son of Adam, Luke 3:23-38, was none of these branches; for as he came not of Adam, in virtue of the blessing of marriage, which was given before the fall, Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful, and multiply," etc.—but in virtue of a special promise made after the fall, Genesis 3:15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," he could not be represented by Adam in a covenant made before his fall.

(3.) As it is impossible for a branch to be in two stocks at once, so no man can be at one and the same time, both in the first and second Adam.

(4.) Hence it evidently follows, that all who are not engrafted in Jesus Christ, are yet branches of the old stock; and so partake of the nature of the same.

Now, as to the first Adam, our natural stock, consider,

First, What a stock he was originally. He was a vine of the Lord's planting, a choice vine, a noble vine, wholly good. There was a consultation of the Trinity at the planting of this vine, Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness." There was no rottenness at the heart of it. There was sap and juice enough in it to have nourished all the branches, to bring forth fruit unto God. My meaning is, Adam was made able perfectly to keep the commandments of God, which would have procured eternal life to himself, and to all his posterity; for as all die by Adam's disobedience, all would have had life by his obedience, if he had stood. Consider,

Secondly, What that stock now is. Ah! most unlike to what it was when planted by the Author of all good. A blast from hell, and a bite with the venomous teeth of the old serpent, have made it a degenerate stock; a dead stock; nay, a killing stock.

1. It is a degenerate EVIL stock. Therefore, the Lord God said to Adam in that dismal day, "Where are you?" Genesis 3:9. In what condition are you now? "How are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Or, "Where were you?" Why not in the place of meeting with me? Why so long in coming? What means this fearful change; this hiding of yourself from me?

Alas! the stock is degenerate, quite spoiled, is become altogether evil, and brings forth wild grapes. Converse with the devil is preferred to communion with God. Satan is believed; and God, who is truth itself, disbelieved. He who was the friend of God is now in conspiracy against him. Darkness is come in the place of light; ignorance prevails in the mind, where divine knowledge shone; the will, which was righteous and regular, is now turned rebel against its Lord: and the whole man is in dreadful disorder.

Before I go farther, let me stop and observe, Here is a mirror both for saints and sinners. Sinners, stand here and consider what you are; and saints, learn what you once were. You, sinners, are branches of a degenerate stock. Fruit you may bear indeed; but now that your vine is the vine of Sodom, your grapes must of course be grapes of gall, Deuteronomy 32:32. The Scripture speaks of two sorts of fruit which grow on the branches of the natural stock; and it is plain that they are of the nature of their degenerate stock. (1.) The wild grapes of wickedness, Isaiah 5:2. These grow in abundance, by influence from hell. See Galatians 5:19-21. At its gates are all manner of these fruits, both new and old. Storms come from heaven to check them; but still they grow. They are struck at with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; conscience gives them many a secret blow; yet they thrive. (2.) Fruit to themselves, Hosea 10:1. What else are all the unrenewed man’s acts of obedience, his reformation, sober deportment, his prayers, and good works? They are all done chiefly for himself, not for the glory of God. These fruits are like the apples of Sodom, fair to look at—but full of ashes when handled and tried. You think you have not only the leaves of a profession—but the fruits of a holy practice too; but if you be not broken off from the old stock, and engrafted in Christ Jesus, God accepts not, and regards not your fruits.

Here I must take occasion to tell you, there are five faults will be found in heaven with your best fruits.

(1.) Their bitterness; your "clusters are bitter," Deuteronomy 32:32. There is a spirit of bitterness, wherewith some come before the Lord, in religious duties, living in malice and envy; and which some professors entertain against others, because they outshine them in holiness of life, or because they are not of their opinion. This, wherever it reigns, is a fearful symptom of an unregenerate state. But I do not so much mean this, as that which is common to all the branches of the old stock, namely, the leaves of hypocrisy, Luke 12:1, which sours and embitters every duty they perform. Wisdom, which is full of good fruits, is without hypocrisy, James 3:17.

(2.) Their ill savor. Their works are abominable, for they themselves are corrupt, Psalms 14:1. They all savor of the old stock, not of the new. It is the peculiar privilege of the saints, that they are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, 2 Corinthians 2:15. The unregenerate man’s fruits savor not of love to Christ, nor of the blood of Christ, nor of the incense of his intercession; and therefore will never be accepted in heaven.

(3.) Their unripeness. Their grape is an unripe grape, Job 15:33. There is no influence on them from the Sun of righteousness to bring them to perfection. They have the shape of fruit—but no more. The matter of duty is in them—but they lack right principles and ends: their works are not in God, John 3:21. Their prayers drop from their lips, before their hearts are impregnated with the vital sap of the Spirit of supplication: their tears fall from their eyes before their hearts are truly softened; their feet turn to new paths, and their way is altered, while their nature still is unchanged.

(4.) Their lightness. Being weighed in the balances, they are found lacking, Daniel 5:27. For evidence whereof, you may observe that they do not humble the soul—but lift it up in pride. The good fruits of holiness bear down the branches they grow upon, making them to salute the ground, 1 Corinthians 15:19, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I—but the grace of God which was with me." But the blasted fruits of unrenewed men's performances, hang lightly on branches towering up to heaven, Judges 17:13, "Now know I, that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite as my priest." They look, indeed, too high for God to behold them: "Why have we fasted, say they, and you see not" Isaiah 58:3. The more duties they do, and the better they seem to perform them, the less are they humbled, and the more are they lifted up. This disposition of the sinner is the exact reverse of what is to be found in the saint. To men, who neither are in Christ, nor are solicitous to be found in him, their duties are like floating bladders, wherewith they think to swim ashore to Immanuel's land; but these must needs break, and they consequently sink, because they take not Christ for the lifter up of their heads, Psalms 3:3; Psalms 3:5. They are not all manner of pleasant fruits, Song of Solomon 7:13. Christ, as a king, must be served with variety. Where God makes the heart his garden, he plants it as Solomon did his, with trees of all kinds of fruits, Ecclesiastes 2:5. Accordingly, it brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in all goodness, Ephesians 5:9. But the ungodly are not so; their obedience is never universal; there is always some one thing or other excepted. In one word, their fruits are fruits of an evil tree, which cannot be accepted in heaven.

2. Our natural stock is a DEAD stock, according to the threatening, Genesis 2:17, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." Our root is now rottenness; no wonder the blossom goes up as dust. The stroke has gone to the heart, the sap is let out, and the tree is withered. The curse of the first covenant, like a hot thunderbolt from heaven, has lighted on it, and ruined it. It is cursed now as that fig-tree, Matthew 21:19, "Let no fruit grow on you henceforward forever." Now it is good for nothing—but to cumber the ground, and furnish fuel for Tophet.

Let me enlarge a little here also. Every unrenewed man is a branch of a dead stock. When you see, O sinner, a dead stock of a tree, exhausted of all its sap, having branches on it in the same condition, look on it as a lively representation of your soul's state.

(1.) Where the stock is dead, the branches must needs be barren. Alas! the barrenness of many professors plainly discovers on what stock they are growing. It is easy to pretend to faith—but "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds." James 2:18.

(2.) A dead stock can convey no sap to the branches, to make them bring forth fruit. The covenant of works was the bond of our union with the natural stock; but now it is become weak through the flesh; that is, through the degeneracy and depravity of human nature, Romans 8:3. It is strong enough to command, and to bind heavy burdens on the shoulders of those who are not in Christ—but it affords no strength to bear them. The sap, that was once in the root, is now gone: the law, like a merciless creditor, apprehends Adam's heirs, saying to each, "Pay what you owe;" when, alas! his effects are riotously spent.

(3.) All pains and cost are lost on the tree, whose life is gone. In vain do men labor to get fruit on the branches, when there is no sap in the root. The gardener's pains are lost: ministers lose their labor on the branches of the old stock, while they continue on it. Many sermons are preached to no purpose; because there is no life to give sensation. Sleeping men may be awakened; but the

dead cannot be raised without a miracle; even so the dead sinner must remain, if he be not restored to life by a miracle of grace. The influences of heaven are lost on such a tree: in vain does the rain fall upon it; in vain is it laid open to the winter cold and frosts. The Lord of the vineyard digs about many a dead soul—but it is not bettered. "Bruise the fool in a mortar, his folly will not depart." Though he meets with many crosses—yet he retains his lusts: let him be laid on a sick bed, he will lie there like a sick beast, groaning under his pain—but not mourning for, nor turning from, his sin. Let death itself stare him in the face, he will presumptuously maintain his hope. Sometimes there are common operations of the divine Spirit performed on him: he is sent home with a trembling heart, and with arrows of conviction sticking in his soul; but at length he prevails against these things, and becomes as secure as ever. Summer and winter are alike to the branches on the dead stock. When others about them are budding, blossoming, and bringing forth fruit, there is no change on them: the dead stock has no growing time at all.

Perhaps it may be difficult to know, in the winter, what trees are dead, and what are alive; but the spring plainly discovers it. There are some seasons wherein there is little life to be perceived, even among saints; yet times of reviving come at length. But even when "the vine flourishes, and the pomegranates bud forth," when saving grace is discovering itself by its lively actings wherever it is, the branches on the old stock are still withered. When the dry bones are coming together, bone to bone among saints, the sinner's bones are still lying about the grave's mouth. They are trees that cumber the ground, ready to be cut down; and will be cut down for the fire, if God in mercy does not prevent it—by cutting them off from that stock, and engrafting them into another.

3. Our natural stock is a KILLING stock. If the stock dies, how can the branches live? If the sap is gone from the root and heart, the branches must needs wither. "In Adam all die," 1 Corinthians 15:22. The root died in Paradise, and all the branches in it, and with it. The root is poisoned, and from thence the branches are infected; "death is in the pot;" and all that taste of the pottage, are killed.

Know then, that every natural man is a branch of a killing stock. Our natural root not only gives us no life—but it has a killing power, reaching to all the branches thereof. There are four things which the first Adam conveys to all his branches, and they are abiding in, and lying on, such of them as are not engrafted in Christ.

(1.) A corrupt nature. He sinned, and his nature was thereby corrupted and depraved; and this corruption is conveyed to all his posterity. He was infected, and the contagion spread itself over all his descendents.

(2.) Guilt, that is, an obligation to punishment, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." The threatenings of the law, as cords of death, are twisted about the branches of the old stock, to draw them over the hedge into the fire. And until they be cut off from this stock by the pruning-knife, the sword of vengeance hangs over their heads, to cut them down.

(3.) This killing stock transmits the curse into the branches. The stock, as the stock (for I speak not of Adam in his personal and private capacity), being cursed, so are the branches, Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." The curse affects the whole man, and all that belongs to him, everything he possesses; and works three ways.

[1.] As poison, infecting; thus their blessings are cursed, Malachi 2:2. Whatever the man enjoys, it can do him no good—but evil, being thus poisoned by the curse. His prosperity in the world destroys him, Proverbs 1:32. The ministry of the gospel is a savor of death unto death to him, 2 Corinthians 2:16. His seeming attainments in religion are cursed to him; his knowledge serves but to puff him up, and his duties to keep him back from Christ.

[2.] It works as a moth, consuming and wasting by little and little, Hosea 5:12, "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth." There is a worm at the root, consuming them by degrees. Thus the curse pursued Saul, until it wormed him out of all his enjoyments, and out of the very show he had of religion. Sometimes they decay like the fat of lambs, and melt away as the snow in the sunshine.

[3.] It acts as a lion rampant, Hosea 5:14, "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion." The Lord "rains on them snares fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest," in such a manner, that they are hurried away with the stream. He tears their enjoyments from them in his wrath, pursues them with terrors, rends their souls from their bodies, and throws the dead branch into the fire. Thus the curse devours like fire, which none can quench.

(4.) This killing stock transmits death to the branches upon it. Adam took the poisonous cup, and drank it off: this occasioned death to himself and us. We came into the world spiritually dead, thereby exposed to eternal death, and absolutely liable to temporal death. This root is to us like the Scythian river, which, they say, brings forth little bladders every day, out of which come certain small flies, that are bred in the morning, winged at noon, and dead at night: a very lively emblem of our mortal state.

Now, sirs, is it not absolutely necessary to be broken off from this our natural stock? What will our fair leaves of a profession, or our fruits of duties, avail—if we be still branches of the degenerate, dead, and killing stock? But, alas! of the many questions among us, few are taken up about these, "Whether am I broken off from the old stock, or not? Am I engrafted in Christ, or not?" Ah! why all this waste of time? Why is there so much noise about religion among many, who can give no good account of their having laid a good foundation, being mere strangers to experimental religion? I fear, if God does not in mercy undermine the religion of many of us, and let us see that we have none at all, our root will be found rottenness, and our blossom go up as dust, in a dying hour. Therefore, let us look to our state, that we be not found fools in our latter end.

II. Let us now view the SUPERNATURAL stock, into which the branches cut off from the natural stock are engrafted. Jesus Christ is sometimes called "The Branch," Zechariah 3:8. So he is in respect of his human nature, being a branch, and the top branch, of the house of David. Sometimes he is called a Root, Isaiah 11:10. We have both together, Revelation 21:16, "I am the root and the offspring of David;" David’s root as God, and his offspring as man. The text tells us, that he is the vine, that is, he, as a Mediator, is the vine stock, whereof believers are the branches. As the sap comes from the earth into the root and stock, and from thence is diffused into the branches; so, by Christ as Mediator, divine life is conveyed from the fountain, unto those who are united to him by faith, John 6:57, "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so, he who eats me, even he shall live by me." By Christ as Mediator, not as God only, as some have asserted; nor yet as man only, as the papists generally hold: but as Mediator, God and man, Acts 20:28, "The church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." Hebrews 9:14, "Christ,

who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God." The divine and human natures have their distinct actings—yet a joint operation, in his discharging the office of Mediator. This is illustrated by the similitude of a fiery sword, which at once cuts and burns: cutting it burns, and burning it cuts; the steel cuts, and the fire burns. Therefore Christ, God-man, is the stock, whereof believers are the branches: and they are united to a whole Christ. They are united to him in his human nature, as being "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Ephesians 5:30. And they are united to him in his divine nature; for so the apostle speaks of this union, Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Those who are Christ's have the Spirit of Christ, Romans 8:9; and by him they are united to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit; 1 John 4:15, "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God." Faith, the bond of this union, receives a whole Christ, God-man, and so unites us to him as such.

Behold here, O believers, your high privilege. You were once branches of a degenerate stock, even as others: but you have, by grace, become branches of the true vine, John 15:1. You are cut out of a dead and killing stock, and engrafted in the last Adam, who was made a quickening spirit, 1 Corinthians 15:45. Your loss by the first Adam is made up, with great advantage, by your union with the second. Adam, at his best estate, was but a shrub, in comparison with Christ the tree of life. He was but a servant; Christ is the Son, the Heir, and Lord of all things, "the Lord from heaven." It cannot be denied, that grace was shown in the first covenant: but it is as far exceeded by the grace of the second covenant, as the twilight is by the light of the mid-day.

III. What BRANCHES are taken out of the natural stock, and grafted into this vine? Answer: These are the elect, and no others. They, and they alone, are grafted into Christ; and consequently, none but they are cut off from the killing stock. For them alone he intercedes, "That they may be one in him and his Father," John 17:9-23. Faith, the bond of this union, is given to none else; it is the faith of God's elect, Titus 1:1. The Lord passes by many branches growing on the natural stock, and cuts off only here one, and there one, and grafts them into the true vine, according as His sovereign love has determined. Often does he pitch upon the most unlikely branch, leaving the top boughs; passing by the mighty and the noble, and calling the weak, base, and despised, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. Yes, he often leaves the lovely and smooth, and takes the broken and knotty; "and such were some of you—but you are washed," etc., 1 Corinthians 6:11.

If we inquire, "Why so?" we find no other reason, but because they were chosen in him, Ephesians 1:4; "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," Ephesians 1:5. Thus are they gathered together in Christ, while the rest are left growing on their natural stock, to be afterwards bound up in bundles for the fire. Therefore, to whoever the Gospel may come in vain, it will have a blessed effect on God's elect, Acts 13:48, "as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Where the Lord has many people, the gospel will have much success, sooner or later. Such as are to be saved, will be added to the mystical body of Christ.

IV. I am now to show HOW the branches are cut off from the natural stock, the first Adam, and grafted into the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks to the Farmer, not to the branch, which is cut off from its natural stock, and grafted into a new one. The sinner, in his coming off from the first stock, is passive, and neither can nor will come off from it of his own accord—but clings to it, until almighty power makes him to fall off, John 6:44, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who has sent me, draw him." And John 5:40, "You will not come to me, that you might have life."

The engrafted branches are "God's husbandry," 1 Corinthians 3:9, "The planting of the Lord," Isaiah 61:3. The ordinary means he makes use of, in this work, is the ministry of the word, 1 Corinthians 3:9, "We are laborers together with God." But the efficacy thereof is wholly from him, whatever the minister's parts or piety is, 1 Corinthians 3:7, "Neither is he who plants anything, neither he who waters; but God that gives the increase." The apostles preached to the Jews—yet the body of that people remained in infidelity, Romans 10:16, "Who has believed our report?" Yes, Christ himself, who spoke as never man spoke, says concerning the success of his own ministry, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing," Isaiah 49:4. The branches may be hacked by the preaching of the word; but the stroke will never go through—until it is carried home by the omnipotent arm. However, God's ordinary way is, "by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe," 1 Corinthians 1:21. The cutting of the branch from the natural stock, is performed by the pruning knife of the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, Galatians 2:19, "For I, through the law, am dead to the law." It is by the bond of the covenant of works, as I said before, that we are knit to our natural stock: therefore, as a wife, unwilling to be put away, pleads and hangs by the marriage tie; so do men by the covenant of works. They hold by it, like the man who held the ship with his hands; and when one hand was cut off, held it with the other; and when both were cut off, held it with his teeth. This will appear from a distinct view of the Lord's works on men, in bringing them off from the old stock; which I offer in the following particulars:

1. When the Spirit of the Lord comes to deal with a person, to bring him to Christ, he finds him in Laodicea's case, in a sound sleep of security, dreaming of heaven and the favor of God, though full of sin against the Holy One of Israel, Revelation 3:17, "You don't know, that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Therefore, he darts in some beams of light into the dark soul; and lets the man see that he is a lost man, if he does not become a new man, and betake himself to a new course of life. Thus, by the Spirit of the Lord, acting as a spirit of bondage, there is a criminal court erected in the man's bosom; where he is arraigned, accused, and condemned for breaking the law of God, "convicted of sin and judgment," John 16:8. And now he can no longer sleep securely in his former course of life. This is the first stroke which the branch gets, in order to cutting off.

2. Hereupon the man forsakes his former profane courses, his lying, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, and such like practices; though they are dear to him as right eyes, he will rather forsake them than ruin his soul. The ship is likely to sink, and therefore he throws his goods overboard, that he himself may not perish. Now he begins to bless himself in his heart, and looks joyfully on his evidences for heaven; thinking himself a better servant to God than many others, Luke 18:11, "God, I thank you, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," etc. But he soon gets another stroke with the axe of the law, showing him that it is only he who does what is written in the law, who can be saved by it; and that his negative holiness is too scanty a covering from the storm of God's wrath. Thus, although his sins of commission only were heavy on him before, his sins of omission now crowd into his thoughts, attended with a train of law curses and vengeance. And each of the ten commandments discharges thunder-claps of wrath against him for his omission of required duties.

3. Upon this he turns to a positively holy course of life. He not only is not profane—but he performs religious duties: he prays, seeks the knowledge of the principles of religion, strictly observes the Lord's day, and, like Herod, does many things, and hears sermons gladly. In one word, there is a

great conformity, in his outward conversation, to the letter of both tables of the law. There is a mighty change in the man, which his neighbors cannot miss taking notice of. Hence he is cheerfully admitted by the godly into their society, as a praying person; and can confer with them about religious matters, yes, and about soul exercise, which some are not acquainted with; and their good opinion of him confirms his good opinion of himself. This step in religion is fatal to many, who never get beyond it. But here the Lord gives the elect branch a farther stroke. Conscience flies in the man's face, for some wrong steps in his conversation, the neglect of some duty, or commission of some sin, which is a blot in his conversation; and then the flaming sword of the law appears again over his head, and the curse rings in his ears, for that he "continues not in all things written in the law, to do them," Galatians 3:10.

4. On this account, he is obliged to seek another remedy for his disease. He goes to God, confesses his sin, seeks the pardon of it, promising to watch against it for the time to come; and so finds case, and thinks he may very well take it, seeing the scripture says, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," 1 John 1:9; not considering that he grasps at a privilege, which is only theirs who are grafted into Christ, and under the covenant of grace, and which the branches yet growing on the old stock cannot plead. And here sometimes there are formal and express vows made against such and such sins, and binding to such and such duties. Thus many go on all their days, knowing no other religion, than to perform duties, and to confess, and pray for pardon of that wherein they fail, promising themselves eternal happiness, though they are utter strangers to Christ.

Here many elect ones have been cast down wounded, and many reprobrates have been slain, while the wounds of neither of them have been deep enough to cut them off from their natural stock. But the Spirit of the Lord gives yet a deeper stroke to the branch which is to be cut off, showing him, that, as yet, he is but an outside saint, and discovering to him the filthy lusts lodged in his heart, which he took no notice of before, Romans 7:9, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Then he sees his heart to be full of sinful lusts, covetousness, pride, malice, filthiness and the like. Now, as soon as the door of the chambers of his imagery is thus opened to him, and he sees what they do there in the dark, his outside religion is blown up as insufficient; and he learns a new lesson in religion, namely, "That he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly," Romans 2:28.

5. Upon this he goes farther, even to inside religion; sets to work more vigorously than ever, mourns over the evils of his heart, and strives to keep down the weeds which he finds growing in that neglected garden. He labors to curb his pride and passion, and to banish impurities of thought; prays more fervently, hears attentively, and strives to get his heart affected in every religious duty he performs; and thus he comes to think himself, not only an outside—but an inside Christian. Wonder not at this—for there is nothing in it beyond the power of nature, or what one may attain to under a vigorous influence of the covenant of works; therefore, another yet deeper stroke is given! The law charges home on the man's conscience, that he was a transgressor from the womb; that he came into the world a guilty creature; and that in the time of his ignorance, and even since his eyes were opened, he has been guilty of many actual sins, either altogether overlooked by him or not sufficiently mourned over; for spiritual sores, not healed by the blood of Christ—but skinned over some other way, so as to be easily irritated, and soon to break out again; therefore, the law takes him by the throat, saying, "Pay what you owe!"

6. Then the sinner says in his heart, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all;" and so falls to work to pacify an offended God, and to atone for those sins. He renews his repentance, such as it is; bears patiently the afflictions laid upon him; yes, he afflicts himself, denies himself the use of his lawful comforts, sighs deeply, mourns bitterly, cries with tears for a pardon, until he has wrought up his heart to a conceit of having obtained it: having thus done penance for what is past, he resolves to be a good servant to God, and to hold on in outward and inward obedience, for the time to come. But the stroke must go nearer the heart yet, before the branch falls off. The Lord discovers to him, in the glass of the law, how he sins in all he does, even when he does the best he can; and therefore the dreadful sound returns to his ears, Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things," etc. "When you fasted and mourned," says the Lord, "did you at all fast unto me, even to me?" Will muddy water make clean clothes? Will you satisfy for one sin with another? Did not your thoughts wander in such a duty? Were not your affections flat in another? Did not your heart give a sinful look to such an idol? And did it not rise in a fit of impatience under such an affliction? "Should I accept this of your hands? Cursed be the deceiver, who sacrifices to the Lord a corrupt thing," Malachi 1:13-14. And thus he becomes so far broken off, that he sees he is not able to satisfy the demands of the law.

7. Hence, like a broken man, who finds he is not able to pay all his debt, he goes about to deal with his creditor. And, being in pursuit of ease and comfort, he does what he can to fulfill the law; and wherein he fails, he trusts that God will accept the will for the deed. Thus doing his duty, and having a will to do better, he cheats himself into persuasion of the goodness of his state: and hereby thousands are ruined. But the elect get another stroke, which loosens their hold in this case. The doctrine of the law is borne in on their consciences, demonstrating to them, that exact and perfect obedience is required by it, under pain of the curse; and that it is doing, and not wishing to do—which will avail. Wishing to do better will not answer the law’s demands; and therefore the curse sounds again, "Cursed is everyone that continues not - to do them;" that is, actually to do them. In vain is wishing then.

8. Being broken off from all hopes of fulfilling the law, he falls to borrowing. He sees that all he can do to obey the law, and all his desires to be and to do better—will not save his soul: therefore, he goes to Christ, entreating, that His righteousness may make up what is lacking in his own, and cover all the defects of his doings and sufferings; that so God, for Christ’s sake, may accept them, and thereupon be reconciled. Thus doing what he can to fulfill the law, and looking to Christ to make up all his defects, he comes at length to sleep securely again. Many people are ruined this way. This was the error of the Galatians, which Paul, in his epistle to them, disputes against. But the Spirit of God breaks off the sinner from this hold also, by bringing home to his conscience that great truth, Galatians 3:12, "The law is not of faith—but the man who does them, shall live in them." There is no mixing of the law and faith in this business; the sinner must hold by one of them, and let the other go. The way of the law, and the way of faith, are so far different, that it is not possible for a sinner to walk in the one, unless he comes off from the other: and if he be for doing, he must do all alone; Christ will not do a part for him, if he does not all. A garment pieced up of sundry sorts of righteousness, is not a garment fit for the court of heaven. Thus the man is like one in a dream, who thought he was eating—but being awakened by a stroke, behold his soul is faint; his heart sinks in him like a stone, while he finds that he can neither bear his burden himself alone, nor can he get help under it.

9. What can he do who must needs pay, and yet has not enough of his own to bring him out of debt; nor can borrow so much, and is ashamed to beg? What can such a one do, I say—but sell himself, as the man under the law, who had become poor? Leviticus 25:47. Therefore, the sinner, beat off from so many holds, attempts to make a bargain with Christ, and to sell himself to the Son of God, if I may so speak, solemnly promising and vowing, that he will be a servant to Christ, as long as he lives, if he will save his soul. And here, the sinner often makes a personal covenant with Christ, resigning himself to him on these terms; yes, and takes the sacrament, to make the bargain sure. Hereupon the man's great care is—how to obey Christ, keep his commandments, and so fulfill his bargain. In this the soul finds a false, unsound peace, for a while; until the Spirit of the Lord gives another stroke, to cut off the man from this refuge of lies likewise. And that happens in this manner: when he fails of the duties he engaged to perform, and falls again into the sin he covenanted against, it is powerfully carried home on his conscience, that his covenant is broken; so all his comfort goes, and terrors afresh seize on his soul, as one who has broken covenant with Christ. Commonly the man to help himself, renews his covenant—but breaks it again as before. And how is it possible it should be otherwise, seeing he is still upon the old stock? Thus the work of many, all their days, as to their souls, is nothing but a making and breaking such covenants, over and over again.

Objection. Some perhaps will say, "Who lives, and sins not? Who is there that fails not of the duties he has engaged to? If you reject this way as unsound, who then can be saved?"

Answer. True believers will be saved, namely, all who do by faith take hold of God's covenant. But this kind of covenant is men's own covenant, devised of their own heart; not God's covenant, revealed in the gospel of his grace: and the making of it is nothing else but the making of a covenant of works with Christ, confounding the law and the Gospel; a covenant God will never subscribe to, though we should sign it with our heart's blood. Romans 4:14; Romans 4:16, "For if those who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."

God's covenant is everlasting; once in and never out of it again; and the mercies of it are sure mercies, Isaiah 55:3. But that covenant of yours is a tottering covenant, never sure—but broken every day. It is a mere servile covenant, giving Christ service for salvation; but God's covenant is a filial covenant, in which the sinner takes Christ, and his salvation freely offered, and so becomes a son, John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God:" and being become a son, he serves his Father, not that the inheritance may become his—but because it is his, through Jesus Christ. See Galatians 4:24, and onward. To enter into that false covenant, is to buy from Christ with money; but to take hold of God's covenant, is to buy of him without money and without price, Isaiah 55:1, that is to say, to beg of him. In that covenant men work for life; in God's covenant they come to Christ for life, and work from life. When a person under that covenant fails in his duty, all is gone; the covenant must be made over again. But under God's covenant, although the man fails in his duty, and for his failure falls under the discipline of the covenant, and lies under the weight of it, until such time as he has recourse anew to the blood of Christ for pardon, and renew his repentance; yet all that he trusted to, for life and salvation, namely, the righteousness of Christ, still stands entire, and the covenant remains firm. See

Romans 7:24-25; and Romans 8:1.

Now, though some men spend their lives in making and breaking such covenants of their own, the terror on the breaking of them becoming weaker and weaker, by degrees, until at last it creates them little or no uneasiness; yet the man, in whom the good work is carried on, until it be accomplished in cutting him off from the old stock, finds these covenants to be as rotten cords, broken at every touch; and the terror of God being thereupon redoubled on his spirit, and the waters at every turn getting in unto his very soul, he is obliged to cease from catching hold of such covenants and to seek help some other way.

10. Therefore, the man comes at length to beg at Christ's door for mercy; but yet he is a proud beggar, standing on his personal worth. For, as the papists have many mediators to plead for them, so the branches of the old stock have always something to produce, which they think may commend them to Christ, and engage him to take their cause in hand. They cannot think of coming to the spiritual market, without money in their hand. They are like people who have once had an estate of their own—but are reduced to extreme poverty, and forced to beg. When they come to beg, they still remember their former character; and though they have lost their substance—yet they retain much of their former spirit: therefore, they cannot think that they ought to be treated as ordinary beggars—but deserve a particular regard; and, if that be not given them, their spirits rise against him to whom they address themselves for a supply. Thus God gives the unhumbled sinner many common mercies, and shuts him not up in the pit according to his deserving; but all this is nothing in his eyes. He must be set down at the children's table, otherwise he reckons himself hardly dealt with, and wronged: for he is not yet brought so low, as to think God may be justified when he speaks against him, when he judges him according to his real demerit, Psalms 51:4.

He thinks, perhaps, that, even before he was enlightened, he was better than many others; he considers his reformation of life—his repentance; the grief and tears which his sin has cost him—his earnest desires after Christ, his prayers and wrestlings for mercy; and uses all these now as bribes for mercy, laying no small weight upon them in his addresses to the throne of grace. But here the Spirit of the Lord shoots his arrows quickly into the man's heart, whereby his confidence in these things is sunk and destroyed; and, instead of thinking himself better than many—he is made to see himself worse than any. The faults in his reformation of life are discovered; his repentance appears to him no better than the repentance of Judas; his tears like Esau's, and his desires after Christ to be selfish and loathsome, like those who sought Christ because of the loaves, John 6:26. His answer from God seems now to be, "Away, proud beggar, How shall I put you among the children?" He seems to look sternly on him, for his slighting of Jesus Christ by unbelief, which is a sin he scarcely discerned before. But now at length he beholds it in its crimson colors, and is pierced to the heart, as with a thousand darts, while he sees how he has been going on blindly, sinning against the remedy of sin, and, in the whole course of his life, trampling on the blood of the Son of God. And now he is, in his own eyes, the miserable object of law vengeance, yes, and gospel vengeance too.

11. The man being thus far humbled, will no more plead, "he is worthy for whom Christ should do this thing;" but, on the contrary, looks on himself as unworthy of Christ, and unworthy of the favor of God. We may compare him, in this case, to the young man who followed Christ, having a linen

cloth cast about his naked body; who, when "the men laid hold on him," "left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked," Mark 14:51-52. Even so the man had been following Christ, in the thin and cold garment of his own personal worthiness: but by it, even by it, which he so much trusted to, the law catches hold of him, to make him prisoner; and then he is hesitant to leave it, and flees away naked; yet not to Christ—but from him. If you now tell him he is welcome to Christ, if he will come to him; he is apt to say, Can such a vile and unworthy wretch as I, be welcome to the holy Jesus? If a plaster be applied to his wounded soul, it will not stick. He says, "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," Luke 5:8. No man needs speak to him of his repentance, for his comfort; he can quickly espy such faults in it as makes it worthless: nor of his tears; for he is assured they have never come into the Lord's bottle. He disputes himself away from Christ; and concludes, now that he has been such a slighter of Christ, and is such an unholy and vile creature, that he cannot, he will not, he ought not to come to Christ; and that he must either be in better case, or else he will never believe.

Hence he now makes the strongest efforts to amend what was amiss in his way before: he prays more earnestly than ever, mourns more bitterly, strives against sin in heart and life more vigorously, and watches more diligently, if by any means he may at length be fit to come to Christ. One would think the man is well humbled now: but, ah! deep pride lurks under the veil of this seeming humility; like a branch of the old stock, he adheres still, and will not submit to the righteousness of God, Romans 10:3. He will not come to the market of free grace, without money. He is bidden to the marriage of the King's Son, where the bridegroom himself furnishes all the guests with wedding garments, stripping them of their own: but he will not come, because he needs a wedding garment; although he is very busy in making one ready. This is sad work; and therefore he must have a deeper stroke yet, else he is ruined. This stroke is given him with the axe of the law, in its irritating power. Thus the law, girding the soul with cords of death, and holding it in with the rigorous commands of obedience, under the pain of the curse; and God, in his holy and wise conduct, withdrawing his restraining grace, corruption is irritated, lusts become violent; and the more they are striven against, the more they rage, like a furious horse checked with the bit. Then corruptions set up their heads, which he never saw in himself before. Here oft-times, atheism, blasphemy, and, in one word, horrible things concerning God, terrible thoughts concerning the faith, arise in his bosom; so that his heart in a very hell within him. Thus, while he is sweeping the house of his heart, not yet watered with gospel grace, those corruptions which lay quiet before, in neglected corners, fly up and down in it like dust. He is as one who is mending the bank of a river, and while he is repairing breaches in it, and strengthening every part of it, a mighty flood comes down, and overturns his works, and drives all away before it, both that which was newly laid, and what was laid before. Read Romans 7:8-13. This is a stroke which goes to the heart: and by it, his hope of making himself more fit to come to Christ, is cut off.

12. Now the time is come, when the man, between hope and despair, resolves to go to Christ as he is; and therefore, like a dying man, stretching himself just before his breath goes out, he rallies the broken forces of his soul, tries to believe, and in some sort lays hold on Jesus Christ. And now the branch hangs on the old stock by one single tack of a natural faith, produced by the natural vigor of one's own spirit, under a most pressing necessity, Psalms 78:34-35, "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer." Hosea 8:2, "Israel shall cry unto me, My

God, we know you." But the Lord, never failing to perfect his work, fetches yet another stroke, whereby the branch falls quite off. The Spirit of God convincingly discovers to the sinner his utter inability to do anything that is good, and so he dies, Romans 7:9. That voice powerfully strikes through his soul, "How can you believe?" John 5:44. You can no more believe, than you can reach up your hand to heaven, and bring Christ down from thence. Thus at length he sees, that he can neither help himself by working, nor by believing; and having no more to hang by on the old stock, he therefore falls off. While he is distressed thus, seeing himself likely to be swept away with the flood of God's wrath, and yet unable so much as to stretch forth a hand to lay hold of a twig of the tree of life, growing on the bank of the river, he is taken up, and engrafted in the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ giving him the Spirit of faith. By what has been said upon this head, I design not to rack or distress tender consciences; for though there are but few such at this day—yet God forbid that I should offend any of Christ's little ones. But, alas! a dead sleep is fallen upon this generation, they will not be awakened, let us go ever so near to the quick: therefore, I fear that there is another sort of awakening abiding this sermon-proof generation, which shall make the ears of those who hear it tingle. However, I would not have this to be looked upon as the sovereign God's stinted method of breaking off sinners from the old stock. But this I maintain as a certain truth, that all who are in Christ have been broken off from all these several confidences; and that they who were never broken off from them, are yet in their natural stock. Nevertheless, if the house be pulled down, and the old foundation razed, it is much the same whether it was taken down stone by stone, or whether it was undermined, and all fell down together.

Now it is that the branch is engrafted in Jesus Christ. And as the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, was the instrument to cut off the branch from the natural stock; so the Gospel, in the hand of the same Spirit, is the instrument used for engrafting it into the supernatural stock, 1 John 1:3; "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." See Isaiah 61:1-3. The Gospel is the silver cord let down from heaven, to draw perishing sinners to land. And though the preaching of the law prepares the way of the Lord; yet it is in the word of the Gospel that Christ and a sinner meet. Now, as in the natural grafting, the branch being taken up is put into the stock, and being put into it, becomes one with it, so that they are united; even so is the spiritual engrafting, Christ apprehends the sinner, and the sinner, being apprehended of Christ, apprehends him, and so they become one, Php 3:12.

First, Christ apprehends the sinner by his Spirit, and draws him to himself, 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." The same Spirit which is in the Mediator himself, he communicates to his elect in due time, never to depart from them—but to abide in them as a principle of life. The soul is now in the hands of the Lord of life, and possessed by the Spirit of life; how can it then but live? The man gets a ravishing sight of Christ's excellence in the mirror of the gospel: he sees him a full, suitable, and willing Savior; and gets a heart to take him for and instead of all. The Spirit of faith furnishes him feet to come to Christ, and hands to receive him. What by nature he could not do, by grace he can, the Holy Spirit working in him the work of faith with power.

Secondly, The sinner, thus apprehended, apprehends Christ by faith, and is one with the blessed stock, Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The soul that before tried many ways of escape—but all in vain, now looks with the eye of faith, which proves the healing

look. As Aaron’s rod, laid up in the tabernacle, budded, and brought forth buds, Numb. 17:8; so the dead breach, apprehended by the Lord of life, put into, and bound up with the glorious quickening stock, by the Spirit of life buds forth in actual believing on Jesus Christ, whereby this union is completed. "We, having the same Spirit of faith - believe," 2 Corinthians 4:13. Thus the stock and the graft are united, Christ and the Christian are married, faith being the soul’s consent to the spiritual marriage covenant, which as it is proposed in the gospel to mankind-sinners indefinitely, so it is demonstrated, attested, and brought home to the man in particular, by the Holy Spirit: and so he, being joined to the Lord, is one Spirit with him. Hereby a believer lives in and for Christ, and Christ lives in and for the believer, Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me." Hosea 3:3, "You shall not be for another man, so will I also be for you." The bonds, then, of this blessed union are—the Spirit on Christ’s part, and faith on the believer’s part.

Now both the souls and bodies of believers are united to Christ. "He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," 1 Corinthians 6:17. The very bodies of believers have this honor put upon them, that they are "the temple of the Holy Spirit," 1 Corinthians 6:19, and "the members of Christ," 1 Corinthians 6:15. When they sleep in the dust, they sleep in Jesus, 1 Thessalonians 4:14; and it is in virtue of this union they shall be raised up out of the dust again, Romans 8:11, "He shall quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit who dwells in you." In token of this mystical union, the church of believers is called by the name of her Head and Husband, 1 Corinthians 12:12, "For as the body is one, and has many members - so also is Christ."

01.03b MYSTICAL UNION between Christ and Believers1

USE. From what is said, we may draw the following inferences:

1. The preaching of the law is most necessary. He who would engraft, must needs use the pruning-knife. Sinners have many contrivances to keep them from Christ; many things by which they keep their hold of the natural stock; therefore, they have need to be closely pursued, and hunted out of their skulking holes, and refuges of lies.

2. Yet it is the Gospel that crowns the work: "The law makes nothing perfect." The law lays open the wound—but it is the Gospel that heals it. The law "strips a man, wounds him and leaves him half dead:" the Gospel "binds up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil," to heal them. By the law we are broken off—but it is by the Gospel we are taken up and implanted in Christ.

3. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," Romans 8:9. We are told of a monster in nature, having two bodies differently animated, as appeared from contrary affections at one and the same time; but so united, that they were served with the self-same legs. Even so, however men may cleave to Christ, "call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel," Isaiah 48:2, and may be bound up as branches in him, John 15:2, by the outward ties of sacraments; yet if the Spirit that dwells in Christ, dwell not in them, they are not one with him. There is a great difference between adhesion and engrafting. The ivy clasps and twists itself about the oak—but it is not one with it, for it still grows on its own root: so, to allude to Isaiah 4:1, many professors "take hold" of Christ, "and eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel, only they are called by his name." They stay themselves upon him—but grow upon their own root: they take them to support their hopes—but their delights are elsewhere.

4. The union between Christ and his mystical members is firm and indissoluble. Were it so that the believer only apprehended Christ—but Christ not apprehended him, we could promise little as the stability of such a union; it might quickly be dissolved: but as the believer apprehends Christ by faith—so Christ apprehends him by his Spirit—and none shall pluck him out of his hand. Did the child only keep hold of the nurse, it might at length grow weary, and let go its hold, and so fall away: but if the nurse has her arms about the child, it is in no hazard of falling away, even though it be not actually holding by her. So, whatever sinful intermissions may happen in the exercise of faith; yet the union remains sure, by reason of the constant indwelling of the Spirit. Blessed Jesus! "All his saints are in your hand," Deuteronomy 33:3. It is observed by some that the word Abba, is the same whether you read it forward or backward: whatever the believer’s case be, the Lord is still to him, Abba, Father.

5. They have an unsafe hold of Christ, whom he has not apprehended by his Spirit. There are many half marriages here, where the soul apprehends Christ—but is not apprehended of him. Hence, many fall away, and never rise again; they let go their hold of Christ; and when that is gone, all is gone. These are "the branches in Christ that bear not fruit, which the farmer takes away," John 15:2.

Question. How can that be?

Answer. These branches are set in the stock by a profession, or an unsound hypocritical faith. They are bound up with it, in the external use of the sacraments; but the stock and they are never knit: therefore, they cannot bear fruit. And they need not be cut off, nor broken off; they are by the Farmer only taken away; or, as the word primarily signifies, lifted up, and so taken away, because there is nothing to hold them: they are, indeed, bound up with the stock—but were never united to it.

Question. How shall I know if I am apprehended of Christ?

Answer. You may be satisfied in this inquiry, if you consider and apply these two things:

(1.) When Christ apprehends a man by his Spirit, he is so drawn, that he comes away to Christ, with his whole heart: for true believing is believing with all the heart, Acts 8:37. Our Lord's followers are like those who followed Saul at first, men whose hearts God has touched, 1 Samuel 10:26. When the Spirit pours in overcoming grace, they pour out their hearts like water before him, Psalms 62:8. They flow unto him like a river, Isaiah 2:2, "All nations shall flow unto it," namely, to the "mountain of the Lord's house." It denotes not only the abundance of converts—but the disposition of their souls in coming to Christ; they come heartily and freely, as drawn with loving-kindness, Jeremiah 31:3; "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power," Psalms 110:3, that is, free, ready, open-hearted, giving themselves to you as free-will offering. When the bridegroom has the bride's heart, it is a right marriage: but some give their hand to Christ, whodo not give not their heart. Those who are only driven to Christ by terror, will surely leave him again when that terror is gone. Terror may break a heart of stone—but the pieces into which it is broken still continue to be stone; terrors cannot soften it into a heart of flesh. Yet terrors may begin the work which love crowns. The strong wind, and the earthquake, and the fire going before; the still small voice, in which the Lord is, may come after them. When the blessed Jesus is seeking sinners to match with him, they are bold and perverse: they will not speak with him, until he has wounded them, made them captives, and bound them with the cords of death. When this is done, then it is that he comes to them, and wins their hearts. The Lord tells us, Hosea 2:16-20, that chosen Israel shall be married unto himself. But how will the bride's consent be won? Why, in the first place, he will bring her into the wilderness, as he did the people when he brought them out of Egypt, Hosea 2:14. There she will be hardly dealt with, scorched with thirst, and bitten by serpents: and then he will speak comfortably to her; or, as the expression is, he will speak unto her heart. The sinner is first driven, and then drawn unto Christ. It is with the soul as with Noah's dove, she was forced back again to the ark, because she could find nothing else to rest upon: but when she returned, she would have rested on the outside of it, if Noah had not "put forth his hand and pulled her in," Genesis 8:9. The Lord sends his avenger of blood in pursuit of the criminal, who with a sad heart leaves his own city, and with tears in his eyes parts with his old acquaintances, because he dare not stay with them, and he flees for his life to the city of refuge. This is not all his choice, it is forced work; necessity has no law. But when he comes to the gates, and sees the beauty of the place, the excellency and loveliness of it charm him; and then he enters it with heart and good-will, saying, "This is my rest, and here I will stay;" and, as one said in another case, "I had perished, unless I had perished."

(2.) When Christ apprehends a soul, the heart is disengaged from, and turned against sin. As in cutting off the branch from the old stock, the great idol self is brought down, the man is powerfully taught to deny himself; so, in apprehending the sinner by the Spirit, that union is dissolved which was between the man and his lusts, while he was in the flesh, as the apostle expresses it, Romans 7:5. His heart is loosened from them, though formerly as dear to him as the members of his body; as his eyes, legs, or arms; and, instead of taking pleasure in them as before, he longs to be rid of them. When the Lord Jesus comes to a soul, in the day of converting grace, he finds it like Jerusalem, in the day of her nativity, Ezekiel 16:4, drawing its fulsome nourishment and satisfaction from its lusts: but he cuts off this communication, that he may impart to the soul his own consolations, and give it rest in himself. And thus the Lord wounds the head and heart of sin, and the soul comes to him, saying, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit," Jeremiah 16:19.

V. The BENEFITS flowing to true believers from their union with Christ. The chief of the particular benefits which believers have by it, are justification, peace, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace, fruitfulness in good works, acceptance of these works, establishment in the state of grace, support and a special conduct of providence about them. As for communion with Christ, it is such a benefit, as being the immediate consequence of union with him, comprehends all the rest as mediate ones. For as the branch, immediately upon its union with the stock, has communion with the stock in all that is in it; so the believer, uniting with Christ, has communion with him; in which he launches forth into an ocean of happiness, is led into a paradise of pleasures, and has a saving interest in the treasure hid in the field of the Gospel—the unsearchable riches of Christ. As soon as the believer is united to Christ, Christ himself, in whom all fullness dwells, is his, Song of Solomon 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And "how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours," 1 Corinthians 3:22. This communion with Christ is the great comprehensive blessing necessarily flowing from our union with him. Let us now consider the particular benefits flowing from it before mentioned.

1. The first particular benefit that a sinner has by his union with Christ, is JUSTIFICATION; for, being united to Christ, he has communion with him in his righteousness, 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." He stands no more condemned—but justified before God, as being in Christ, Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." The branches hereof are, pardon of sin, and personal acceptance.

(1.) His sins are pardoned, the guilt of them is removed. The bond obliging him to pay his debt is cancelled. God the Father takes the pen, dips it in the blood of his Son, crosses off the sinner's accounts, and blots them out of his debt-book. The sinner outside of Christ is bound over to the wrath of God; he is under an obligation in law to go to the prison of hell, and there to lie until he has paid the utmost farthing. This arises from the terrible sanction with which the law is guarded, which is no less than death, Genesis 2:17. So that the sinner, passing the bounds assigned him, is as Shimei in another case, a man of death, 1 Kings 2:42. But now, being united to Christ, God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom!" Job 33:24. The sentence of condemnation is reversed, the believer is absolved, and set beyond the reach of the condemning law. His sins, which were set before the Lord, Psalms 90:8, so that they could not be hidden—God

now takes and casts them all behind his back, Isaiah 38:17. Yes, he casts them into the depths of the sea, Micah 7:19. What falls into a brook may be retrieved—but what is cast into the sea cannot be recovered. But there are some shallow places in the sea; true—but their sins are not cast in there—but into the depths of the sea; and the depths of the sea are devouring depths, from whence they shall never come forth again. But what if they do not sink? He will cast them in with force, so that they shall go to the bottom, and sink as lead in the mighty waters of the Redeemer's blood.

They are not only forgiven—but forgotten, Jeremiah 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." And though their after-sins do in themselves deserve eternal wrath, and do actually make them liable to temporal strokes, and fatherly chastisements, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, Psalms 89:30-33—yet they can never be actually liable to eternal wrath, or the curse of the law; for they are dead to the law in Christ, Romans 7:4. They can never fall away from their union with Christ; neither can they be in Christ, and yet under condemnation at the same time, Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." This is an inference drawn from that doctrine of the believer's being dead to the law, set forth by the apostle, Romans 7:1-6; as is clear from the second, third, and fourth verses of this eighth chapter. In this respect the justified man is the blessed man, unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, Psalms 32:2; as one who has no design to charge a debt on another, sets it not down in his account-book.

(2.) The believer is accepted as righteous in God's sight, 2 Corinthians 5:21. For he is "found in Christ, not having his own righteousness—but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith," Php 3:9. He could never be accepted by God, as righteous, upon the account of his own righteousness; because, at best, it is but imperfect: and all righteousness, properly so called, which can abide a trial before the throne of God, is perfect. The very name of it implies perfection: for unless a work is perfectly conformable to the law, it is not right—but wrong; and so cannot make a man righteous before God, whose judgment is according to truth. Yet if justice demand a righteousness of one that is in Christ, upon which he may be accounted righteous before the Lord, "Surely shall" such a "one say, In the Lord have I righteousness," Isaiah 45:24. The law is fulfilled, its commands are obeyed, its sanction is satisfied. The believer's surety has paid the debt. It was exacted, and he answered for it.

Thus the person united to Christ is justified. You may conceive of the whole proceeding herein, in this manner. The avenger of blood pursuing the criminal; Christ, as the Savior of lost sinners, does by the Spirit apprehend him, and draw him to himself; and he, by faith, lays hold on Christ: so the Lord our righteousness, and the unrighteous creature, unite. From this union with Christ results a communion with him in his unsearchable riches, and consequently in his righteousness, that white raiment which he has for clothing of the naked, Revelation 3:18. Thus the righteousness of Christ becomes his; and because it is by his unquestionable title, it is imputed to him; it is reckoned his in the judgment of God, which is always according to truth. And so the believing sinner, having a righteousness which fully answers the demands of the law, he is pardoned and accepted as righteous. See Isaiah 45:22-24; Romans 3:24; and Romans 5:1.

Now he is a free man. Who shall lay anything to the charge of those whom God justifies? Can justice lay anything to their charge? No; for it is satisfied. Can the law? No; for it has obtained all its

demands on them in Jesus Christ, Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." What can the law require more, after it has wounded their head, poured in wrath in full measure into their soul, and out of their life, and brought it into the dust of death, by doing all this to Jesus Christ, who is their head, Ephesians 1:22; their soul, Acts 2:25-27; and their life, Colossians 3:4? What is become of the sinner's own handwriting, which would prove the debt upon him? Christ has blotted it out, Colossians 2:14. But it may be, justice may get its eye upon it again. No; he took it out of the way. But O, that it had been torn in pieces! may the sinner say. Yes, so it is; the nails that pierced Christ's hands and feet are driven through it; he nailed it. But what if the torn in pieces be put together again? They cannot be; for he nailed it to his cross, and his cross was buried with him, and will never rise again, seeing Christ dies no more. Where is the face-covering that was upon the condemned man? Christ has destroyed it, Isaiah 25:7. Where is death, that stood before the sinner with a grim face, and an open mouth, ready to devour him? Christ has swallowd it up in victory, Isaiah 25:8. Glory, glory, glory to him that thus "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

2. The second benefit flowing from the same spring of union with Christ, and coming by the way of justification, is PEACE; peace with God, and peace of conscience, according to the measure of the sense the justified have of their peace with God, Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink—but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Whereas God was their enemy before, now he is reconciled to them in Christ: they are in a covenant of peace with him; and, as Abraham was, so are they the friends of God. He is well pleased with them in his beloved Son. His word, which spoke terror to them formerly, now speaks peace, if they rightly understand the language. And there is love in all dispensations towards them, which makes all work together for their good. Their CONSCIENCES are purged of that guilt and filthiness which lay upon them: his conscience-purifying blood streams through their souls, by virtue of their union with him, Hebrews 9:14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ - purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The bonds laid on their consciences by the Spirit of God, acting as the Spirit of bondage, are taken off, never more to be laid on, Romans 8:15, "For you have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear." Hereby the conscience is quieted, as soon as the soul becomes conscious of the application of that blood; which falls out sooner or later, according to the measure of faith, and as the only wise God sees meet to time it.

Unbelievers may have troubled consciences, which they may get quieted again: but, alas! their consciences become peaceable before they become pure; so their peace is but the seed of greater horror and confusion. Carelessness may give ease for a while to a sick conscience; men neglecting its wounds, they skin-over again of their accord, before the impure matter is removed. Many bury their guilt in the grave of a poor memory: conscience smarts a little; at length the man forgets his sin, and there is an end of it; but that is only an ease before death. Business, or the affairs of life, often give ease in this case. When Cain is banished from the presence of the Lord, he falls a-building of cities. When the evil spirit came upon Saul, he calls not for his Bible, nor for the priests to converse with him about his case; but for music, to play it away. So many, when their consciences begin to be uneasy, they fill their heads and hands with business, to divert themselves, and to regain ease at any rate. Yes, some will sin contrary to their convictions, and so do get some ease to their consciences, as Hazael gave ease to his master by stifling him.

Again, the performance of duties may give some ease to disquieted consciences; and this is all which legal professors have recourse to for quieting their consciences. When conscience is wounded they will pray, confess, mourn, and resolve to do so no more: and so they become whole again—without an application of the blood of Christ by faith. But they whose consciences are rightly quieted, come for peace and purification to the blood of sprinkling. Sin leaves a sting behind it, which one time or other will create them no little pain.

Elihu shows us both the case and cure, Job 33:1-33. Behold the case which a man may be in, whom God has thoughts of love to. He darts convictions into his conscience; and makes them stick so fast, that he cannot rid himself of them, Job 33:16, "He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction." His very body sickens, Job 33:19, "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain " He loses his appetite, Job 33:20, "His life abhors bread, and his soul dainty food." His body pines away, so that there is nothing on him but skin and bone," Job 33:21, "His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out." Though he is not prepared for death, he has no hope of life, Job 33:22, "His soul draws near unto the grave, and," which is the height of his misery, "his life to the destroyers;" he is looking every moment when devils, these destroyers, Revelation 9:11, these murderers, or manslayers, John 8:44, will come and carry away his soul to hell. O, dreadful case! Is there any hope for such? Yes, there is hope. God will "keep back his soul from the pit," Job 33:18, although he brings him forward to the brink of it.

Now, see how the sick man is cured. The physician’s art cannot prevail here: the disease lies more inward than his medicines can reach. It is soul trouble which has brought the body into this disorder; and therefore, the remedies must be applied to the sick man’s soul and conscience. The physician for this case must be a spiritual Physician; the remedies must be spiritual—a righteousness, a ransom, an atonement. Upon the application of these, the soul is cured, the conscience is quieted and the body recovers, Job 33:23-26, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: then he is gracious unto him, and says, ’Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom!’ His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s, he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray unto God, and he shall be favorable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy." The proper physician for this patient is a messenger, an interpreter, Job 33:23, that is, as some expositors, not without ground, understand it, the great physician, Jesus Christ, whom Job had called his Redeemer, Job 19:25. He is a messenger, the "messenger of the covenant of peace," Malachi 3:1, who comes seasonably to the sick man. He is an interpreter, the great interpreter of God’s counsels of love to sinners, Job 33:23, "One among a thousand," even "the chief among ten thousand," Song of Solomon 5:10. "One chosen out of the people," Psalms 89:19. One to whom "the Lord has given the tongue of the learned - to speak a word in season to him that is weary," Isaiah 50:4. It is he who is with him, by his Spirit, now, to "convince him of righteousness," John 16:8, as he was with him before, to "convince him of sin and of judgment." His work now is to show unto him his uprightness, or his righteousness, that is, the interpreter Christ’s righteousness; which is the only righteousness, arising from the paying of a ransom, and upon which a sinner is delivered from going down to the pit, John 16:4. Thus Christ is said to declare God’s name, Psalms 22:22, and to preach righteousness, Psalms 40:9. The phrase is remarkable: it is not to show unto the man—but unto man, his righteousness: which not obscurely intimates, that he is more than a man, who shows or

declares this righteousness. Compare Amos 4:13, "He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the Lord God Almighty is his name." There seems to be in it a sweet allusion to the first declaration of this righteousness unto man, or, as the word is, unto Adam, after the fall, while he lay under terror from apprehensions of the wrath of God; which declaration was made by the messenger, the interpreter, namely, the eternal Word, the Son of God, called, the voice of the Lord God, Genesis 3:8, and by him appearing, probably, in human shape.

Now, while he, by his Spirit, is the preacher of righteousness to the man, it is supposed that the man lays hold on the offered righteousness; whereupon the ransom is applied to him, and he is delivered from going down to the pit; for God has a ransom for him. This is intimated to him by the words, "Deliver him," Job 33:24. So his conscience being purified by the blood of atonement, is pacified, and sweetly quieted. "He shall pray unto God - and see his face with joy," which before he beheld with horror, Job 33:26; that is in New Testament language, "Having a high priest over the house of God," he shall "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," Hebrews 10:21-22. But then, what becomes of the body, the weak and weary flesh? Why, "his flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth," Job 33:25. Yes, "All his bones," which were chastened with strong pain, Job 33:19, "shall say, Lord, who is like unto you?" Psalms 35:10.

3. A third benefit flowing from union with Christ is ADOPTION. Believers, being united to Christ, become children of God, and members of the family of heaven. By their union with him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by grace, John 1:12. As when a branch is cut off from one tree, and grafted in the branch of another, the engrafted branch, by means of its union with the adopting branch, is made a branch of the same stock with that into which it is engrafted: so sinners, being engrafted into Jesus Christ, whose name is the Branch, his Father is their Father, his God their God, John 20:17. And thus they, who are by nature children of the devil, become the children of God. They have the Spirit of adoption, Romans 8:15, namely, the Spirit of his Son, which brings them to God, as children to a Father; to pour out their complaints in his bosom, and to seek necessary supplies, Galatians 4:6, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Under all their weaknesses, they have fatherly pity and compassion shown them, Psalms 103:13, "Like as a father pities his children; so the Lord pities those who fear him."

"In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye." Deuteronomy 32:10. Whoever pursues them, they have a refuge, Proverbs 14:26, "His children shall have a place of refuge." In a time of common calamity, they have chambers of protection, where they may be hid until the indignation is over and past, Isaiah 26:20. And he is not only their refuge for protection—but their portion for provision, in that refuge; Psalms 142:5, "You are my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." They are provided for, for eternity, Hebrews 11:16, "He has prepared for them a city." And what he sees they have need of for time, they shall not lack. "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Matthew 6:31-32.

Seasonable correction is likewise their privilege as sons: so they are not allowed to pass with their faults, as others who are not children—but servants of the family, who at length will be turned out of doors for their miscarriages, Hebrews 12:7, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?"

They are heirs of, and shall inherit the promises, Hebrews 6:12. Nay, they are heirs of God, who himself is the portion of their inheritance, Psalms 16:5, "and joint-heirs with Christ," Romans 8:17. And because they are the children of the great King, and heirs of glory, they have angels for their attendants, who are "sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation," Hebrews 1:14.

4. A fourth benefit is SANCTIFICATION, 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification." Being united to Christ, they partake of his Spirit, who is the Spirit of holiness. There is a fullness of the Spirit in Christ, and it is not like the fullness of a vessel, which only retains what is poured into it; but it is the fullness of a fountain for diffusion and communication, which is always sending forth its waters, and yet is always full. The Spirit of Christ, that spiritual sap, which is in the stock, and from thence is communicated to the branches, is the Spirit of grace, Zechariah 12:10. And where the Spirit of grace dwells, there will be found a confluence of all graces. Holiness is not one grace only—but all the graces of the Spirit; it is a constellation of graces; it is all the graces in their seed and root. And as the sap conveyed from the stock into the branch goes through it, and through every part of it; so the Spirit of Christ sanctifies the whole man. The poison of sin was diffused through the whole spirit, soul, and body of the man; and sanctifying grace pursues it into every corner, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Every part of the man is sanctified, though no part is perfectly sanctified. The truth we are sanctified by, is not held in the head, as in a prison—but runs, with its sanctifying influences, through heart and life.

There are indeed some graces, in every believer, which appear as top-branches above the rest: as meekness in Moses, patience in Job; but seeing there is in every child of God, a holy principle going along with the holy law, in all the parts thereof, loving and approving of it - as it appears from their universal respect to the commands of God - it is evident that they are endowed with all the graces of the Spirit; because there cannot be less in the effect, than there was in the cause.

Now, this sanctifying Spirit, whereof believers partake, is unto them,

(1.) A spirit of MORTIFICATION: "through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body," Romans 8:13. Sin is crucified in them, Galatians 5:24. They are planted together, namely, with Christ in the likeness of his death, which was a lingering death, Romans 6:6. Sin in the saint, though not quite dead—yet is dying. If it were dead, it would be taken down from the cross, and buried out of his sight: but it hangs there as yet, working and struggling under its mortal wounds. As, when a tree has got such a stroke as reaches the heart of it, all the leaves and branches begin to fade and decay: so, where the sanctifying Spirit comes, and breaks the power of sin, there is a gradual ceasing from it, and dying to it, in the whole man; so that he "no longer lives in the flesh to the lusts of men." He does not make sin his trade and business; it is not his great design to seek himself, and to satisfy his corrupt inclinations: but he is seeking for Immanuel’s land, and is walking in the highway to it, the way which is called the way of holiness; though the wind from hell, which was on his back before, blows now full in his face, makes his traveling uneasy, and often drives him off the highway.

(2.) This Spirit is a Spirit of VIVIFICATION to them; for he is the Spirit of life, and makes them live unto righteousness, Ezekiel 36:27, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Those who have been "planted together," with Christ, "in the likeness of his death, shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," Romans 6:5. At Christ's resurrection, when his soul was reunited with his body, every member of that blessed body was enabled again to perform the actions of life: so the soul, being influenced by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, is enabled more and more to perform all the actions of spiritual life. And as the whole of the law, and not some scraps of it only, is written on the holy heart; so believers are enabled to transcribe that law, in their conversation. Although they cannot write one line of it without blots—yet God, for Christ's sake, accepts of the performance, in point of sanctification; they being disciples to his own Son, and led by his own Spirit. This sanctified Spirit, communicated by the Lord Jesus to his members, is the spiritual nourishment the branches have from the stock into which they are engrafted; whereby the life of grace, given them in regeneration, is preserved, continued, and actuated. It is the nourishment whereby the new creature lives, and is nourished up towards perfection. Spiritual life needs to be fed, and must have supply of nourishment: and believers derive the same from Christ their head, whom the Father has appointed the head of influence to all his members, Colossians 2:19, "And not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, or supplied," etc. Now this supply is "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," Php 1:19. The saints feed richly, "eating Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood," for their spiritual nourishment: yet our Lord himself teaches us, that "it is the Spirit who quickens," John 6:63, even that Spirit who dwells in his blessed body. The human nature is united to the divine nature, in the person of the Son; and so, like the bowl in Zachariah's candlestick, Zechariah 4:1-14, lies at the fountain-head, as the glorious means of conveyance of influences from the fountain of Deity. He receives not the Spirit by measure—but ever has a fullness of the Spirit, by reason of that personal union. Hence believers, being united to the man Christ, as the seven lamps to the bowl, by their seven pipes, Zechariah 4:2, his flesh is to them food indeed, and his blood drink indeed: for, feeding on that blessed body, that is, effectually applying Christ to their souls by faith, they partake more and more of that Spirit, who dwells therein, to their spiritual nourishment. The holiness of God can never admit of an immediate union with the sinful creature, nor, consequently, an immediate communion with it: yet the creature could not live the life of grace without communion with the fountain of life. Therefore, that the honor of God's holiness and the salvation of sinners might jointly be provided for, the second person of the glorious trinity took into a personal union with himself a sinless human nature; that so this holy, harmless, and undefiled humanity, might immediately receive a fullness of the Spirit, of which he might communicate to his members, by his divine power and efficacy.

Suppose there were a tree, with its root in the earth, and its branches reaching to heaven; the vast distance between the root and the branches would not interrupt the communication between the root and the top branch: even so, the distance between the man Christ, who is in heaven, and his members, who are on earth, cannot hinder the communication between them. What though the parts of mystical Christ, namely the head and the members, are not adjoining, as joined together in the way of corporal union; the union is not therefore the less real and effectual. Yes, our Lord himself shows us, that though we eat his flesh in a corporeal and carnal manner—yet it would profit nothing, John 6:63; we would not be one whit the holier thereby. But the members of Christ on earth are united to their head in heaven, by the invisible bond of the self-same Spirit dwelling in

both; in him as the head, and in them as the members. The wheels in Ezekiel's vision were not adjoining to the living creatures—yet were united to them by an invisible bond of one Spirit in both; so that, "when the living creatures went, the wheels went with them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up," Ezekiel 1:19; "for," says the prophet, "the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels," Ezekiel 1:20.

Hence we may see the difference between true sanctification, and that shadow of it—which is to be found among some strict professors of Christianity, who yet are not true Christians, are not regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, and is of the same kind with what has appeared in many sober heathens. True sanctification is the result of the soul's union with the holy Jesus, the first and immediate receptacle of the sanctifying Spirit; out of whose fullness, his members do, by virtue of their union with him, receive sanctifying influences. The other is the mere product of the man's own spirit, which, whatever it has, or seems to have, of the matter of true holiness—yet does not arise from the supernatural principles, nor to the high aims and ends thereof: for, as it comes from self, so it runs out into the dead sea of self again; and lies as wide of true holiness, as nature does of grace. They who have this species of holiness, are like common boatmen, who serve themselves with their own oars: whereas the ship bound for Immanuel's land, sails by the blowings of the divine Spirit.

How is it possible there should be true satisfaction without Christ? Can there be true sanctification without partaking of the Spirit of holiness? Can we partake of that Spirit—but by Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life?" The falling dew shall as soon make its way through the flinty rock, as the influences of grace come from God to sinners, any other way than through him whom the Father has appointed the head of influences, Colossians 1:19, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell:" and, chapter 2:19, "And not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God." Hence see how it comes to pass, that many fall away from their seeming sanctification, and never recover: it is because they are not branches truly knit to the true vine. Meanwhile, others recover from their decays, because of their union with the life-giving stock, by the quickening Spirit, 1 John 2:19, "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."

5. A fifth benefit is GROWTH IN GRACE. "Having nourishment ministered, they increase with the increase of God," Colossians 2:19. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," Psalms 92:12. Grace is of a growing nature; in the way to Zion, they go from strength to strength. Though the holy man is at first a little child in grace—yet at length he becomes a young man; then a father, 1 John 2:13. Though he does but creep in the way to heaven sometimes—yet afterwards he walks, he runs, he mounts up with wings as eagles, Isaiah 40:31. If a branch grafted into a stock never grows, it is a plain evidence of its not having knit with the stock. But some perhaps may say, "If all true Christians are growing ones, what shall be said of those who, instead of growing, are going backwards?" I answer,

First, There is a great difference between the Christians growing simply, and his growing at all times. All true Christians do grow—but I do not say that they grow at all times. A tree, that has life and nourishment, grows to its perfection—yet it is not always growing; it grows not in the winter. Christians also have their winters, wherein the influences of grace, necessary for their growth,

cease, Song of Solomon 5:2, "I sleep." It is by faith the believer derives gracious influences from Jesus Christ; as each lamp in the candlestick received oil from the bowl, by the pipe going between them, Zechariah 4:2. Now, if that pipe is stopped up, if the saint's faith lies dormant and inactive, then all the rest of the graces will become dim, and seem ready to be extinguished. In consequence whereof, depraved nature will gather strength, and become active. What, then, will become of the soul? Why, there is still one sure ground of hope. The saint's faith is not as the hypocrite's, like a pipe laid short of the fountain, whereby there can be no conveyance: it still remains a bond of union between Christ and the soul; and therefore, because Christ lives, the believer shall live also, John 14:19. The Lord Jesus "puts in his hand by the hole of the door," and clears the means of conveyance; and then influences for growth flow, and the believer's graces look fresh and green again, Hosea 14:7, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." In the worst of times, the saints have a principle of growth in them, 1 John 3:9, "His seed remains in him." Therefore, after decays, they revive again: namely, when the winter is over, and the Sun of righteousness returns to them with his warm influences. Mud thrown into a pool may lie there at ease; but if it be cast into a fountain, the spring will at length work it out, and run as clear as formerly.

Secondly, Christians may MISTAKE their growth, and that two ways.

(1.) By judging of their case according to their present feeling. They observe themselves, and cannot perceive themselves to be growing; but there is no reason thence to conclude they are not growing, Mark 4:27, "The seed springs and grows up—he knows not how." Were a person to fix his eye ever so steadfastly on a growing tree, he would not see it growing; but if he compares the tree as it now is, with what it was some years ago, he will certainly perceive that it has grown. In like manner may the Christian know whether he be in a growing or declining state, by comparing his present with his former condition.

(2.) Christians may mistake their case, by measuring their growth by the advances of the top only, not of the root. Though a man be not growing taller, he may be growing stronger. If a tree be uniting with the ground, fixing itself in the earth, and spreading out its roots, it is certainly growing, although it be not higher than formerly. So, although a Christian may lack the sweet consolations and flashes of affection which he had; yet, if he is growing in humility, self-denial, and sense of needy dependence on Jesus Christ, he is a growing Christian, Hosea 14:5, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

Question. "But do hypocrites grow at all? And if so, how shall we distinguish between their growth, and true Christian growth?"

Answer. To the first part of the question, hypocrites do grow. The tares have their growth, as well as the wheat: the seed that fell among thorns did spring up, Luke 8:7. Only it brought no fruit to perfection, Luke 8:14. Yes, a true Christian may have a false growth. James and John seemed to grow in the grace of holy zeal, when their spirits grew so hot in the cause of Christ, that they would have burned a whole village, for not receiving their Lord and Master, Luke 9:54, "They said, Lord, command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did!" But it was, indeed, no such thing; and therefore, he turned and rebuked them, Luke 9:55, and said, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of." To the second part of the question, it is answered, that there is a peculiar beauty in the true Christian growth, distinguishing it from all false growth: it is

universal, regular, proportionable. It is a "growing up into him in all things, which is the head," Ephesians 4:15. The growing Christian grows proportionably, in all the parts of the new man. Under the kindly influences of the Sun of righteousness, believers "grow up as calves of the stall," Malachi 4:2.

You would think it a monstrous growth, in any creatures—if you saw their heads grow, and not their bodies; or if you saw one leg grow, and another not; if all the parts do not grow proportionably. Yes—but such is the growth of many in religion. They grow like rickety children, who have a big head—but a slender body; they get more knowledge into their heads—but no more holiness into their hearts and lives. They grow very hot outwardly—but very cold inwardly; like men in a fit of the ague. They are more taken up about the externals of religion than formerly; yet as great strangers to the power of godliness as ever.

If a garden is watered with the hand, some of the plants will readily get much, some little, and some no water at all; and therefore, some wither, while others are coming forward: but after a shower from the clouds, all come forward together. In like manner, all the graces of the Spirit grow proportionably, by the special influences of divine grace. The branches engrafted in Christ, growing aright, do grow in all the several ways of growth at once. They grow inward, growing into Christ, Ephesians 4:15, uniting more closely with him; and cleaving more firmly to him, as the head of influences, which is the spring of all other true Christian growth. They grow outward in good works, in their life and conversation. They not only, with Naphtali, give goodly words; but, like Joseph, they are fruitful boughs. They grow upward in heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world; for their conversation is in heaven, Php 3:20. And finally, they grow downward in humility and self-loathing. The branches of the largest growth in Christ, are, in their own eyes, "less than the least of all saints," Ephesians 3:8; "the chief of sinners," 1 Timothy 1:15; "more brutish than any man," Proverbs 30:2. They see that they can do nothing, no, not so much as "think anything, as of themselves," 2 Corinthians 3:5; that they deserve nothing, being "not worthy of the least of all the mercies showed unto them," Genesis 32:10; and that they are nothing, 2 Corinthians 12:11.

6. A sixth benefit is FRUITFULNESS. The branch engrafted into Christ is not barren—but brings forth fruit, John 15:6, "He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." For that very end are souls united to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God, Romans 7:4. Those who are barren may be branches in Christ by profession—but not by real implantation. Whoever are united to Christ, bring forth the fruit of gospel-obedience and true holiness. Faith is always followed with good works. The believer is not only come out of the grave of his natural state; but he has put off his grave-clothes, namely, reigning lusts, in which he walked, like a spirit; being dead while he lived in them, Colossians 3:7-8. For Christ has said of him, as of Lazarus, "Loose him, and let him go." Now that he has put on Christ, he personates him, so to speak, as a beggar in borrowed robes represents a king on the stage, walking as he also walked. Now the fruit of the Spirit in him, is in all goodness, Ephesians 5:9. The fruits of holiness will be found in the hearts, lips, and lives of those who are united to Christ. The hidden man of the heart is not only a temple built for God, and consecrated to him; but used and employed for him, where love, fear, trust, and all the other parts of unseen religion, are exercised, Php 3:3, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit." The heart is no more the devil’s playground, where thoughts go free; for there even vain thoughts are hated, Psalms 119:113. But it is God’s enclosure, hedged about as a garden for him, Song of Solomon 4:16. It is true, there are weeds of

corruption there, because the ground is not yet perfectly cleared: but the man, in the day of his new creation, is set to dress it, and keep it. A live coal from the altar has touched his lips, and they are purified. Psalms 15:1-3, "Lord, who shall abide in your tabernacle? who shall dwell in your holy hill? He who speaks the truth in his heart; he who backbites not with his tongue, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor." There may be, indeed, a smooth tongue—where there is a false heart. The voice may be Jacob's—while the hands are Esau's. But, "if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue—but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain," James 1:26. The power of godliness will rule over the tongue, though a world of iniquity. If one be a Galilean—his speech will betray him; he will not speak the language of Ashdod—but the language of Canaan. He will neither be silent in true religion, nor will his tongue walk at random, seeing, to the double guard which nature has given the tongue (the teeth and the lips), grace has added a third. The fruits of holiness will be found in his outward life; for he has clean hands, as well as a pure heart, Psalms 24:4. He is a godly man, and piously discharges the duties of the first table of the law; he is a righteous man, and honestly performs the duties of the second table. In his life he is a good Christian, and a good neighbor too. He behaves towards God, as if men's eyes were upon him; and towards men, as believing God's eyes to be upon him. Those things which God has joined in his law, he dares not put asunder in his practice.

Thus the branches in Christ are full of good fruits. And those fruits are a cluster of vital actions, whereof Jesus Christ is the principle and end. The principle: for he lives in them, and "the life they live is by faith in the Son of God," Galatians 2:20. The end: for they live to him, and "to them to live is Christ," Php 1:21. The duties of true piety are in the world, like fatherless children, in rags: some will not take them in, because they never loved them nor their Father; some take them in, because they may be serviceable to them. But the saints take them in for their Father's sake, that is, for Christ's sake: and they are lovely in their eyes, because they are like him. O! whence is this new life of the saints? Surely it could never have been hammered out of the natural powers of their souls, by the united force of all created power. In eternal barrenness would they have continued; but that being "married to Christ, they bring forth fruit unto God," Romans 7:4.

If you ask me, "How can your nourishment, growth, and fruitfulness be forwarded?" I offer these few advices:

(1.) Make sure work, as to your knitting with the stock by sincere faith; and beware of hypocrisy: a branch that is not sound at the heart will certainly wither. The trees of the Lord's planting are trees of righteousness, Isaiah 61:3. So, when false professors fade—they continue to bring forth fruit. Hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals of religion, which will consume all at length. It is a leak in the ship, which will certainly sink it. Sincerity of grace will make it lasting, be it ever so weak: as the smallest twig, which is sound at the heart, will draw nourishment from the stock and grow; while the greatest bough that is rotten can never recover, because it receives no nourishment.

(2.) Labor to be steadfast in the truths and way of God. An unsettled and wavering judgment is a great enemy to Christian growth and fruitfulness, as the apostle teaches, Ephesians 4:14-15, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things into Christ—who is the head." A rolling stone gathers no moss, and a wavering judgment makes a fruitless life. Though a tree be ever so sound—yet how can it grow, or be fruitful, if you be always moving it out of one soil

into another?

(3.) Endeavor to cut off the suckers, as gardeners do, that their trees may thrive. These are unmortified lusts; therefore, "mortify your members which are upon the earth," Colossians 3:5. When the Israelites got food for their lusts, they got leanness to their souls. She that has many hungry children about her hand, and must be still putting into their mouths, will have much ado to get a bit put into her own mouth. They must refuse the cravings of inordinate affections, who would have their souls to prosper.

(4.) Improve, for these ends, the ordinances of God. It is in the courts of our God where the trees of righteousness flourish, Psalms 92:13. The waters of the sanctuary are the means appointed of God, to cause his people to grow as willows by the water courses. Therefore, drink in with "desire, the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," 1 Peter 2:2. Come to these wells of salvation: not to look at them only—but to draw water out of them. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is in a special manner appointed for these ends. It is not only a solemn public profession, and a seal of our union and communion with Christ; but it is a means of most intimate communion with him, and strengthens our union with him, our faith, love, repentance, and other graces, 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" And, 1 Corinthians 12:13, "We have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Give yourselves unto prayer; open your mouths wide, and he will fill them. By these means the branches in Christ may be farther nourished, grow up, and bring forth much fruit.

7. A seventh benefit is, The acceptance of their fruits of holiness before the Lord. Though they may be very imperfect, they are accepted, because they savor of Christ, the blessed stock, which the branches grow upon; while the fruits of others are rejected by God, Genesis 4:4-5, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had no respect." Compare Hebrews 11:3, "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." O, how defective are the saints' duties in the eye of the law! The believer himself sees many faults in his best performances; yet the Lord graciously receives them.

There is no grace planted in the heart—but there is a weed of corruption near by its side, while the saints are in the lower world. Their very sincerity is not without a mixture of deception or hypocrisy, Galatians 2:13. Hence there are defects in the exercise of every grace; in the performance of every duty; depraved nature always drops something to stain their best works. There is still a mixture of darkness with their clearest light. Yet this does not mar their acceptance with God, Song of Solomon 6:10, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning?" or, as the dawning? Behold how Christ's spouse is esteemed and accepted of her Lord, even when she looks forth as the dawn, whose beauty is mixed with the blackness of the night! "When the morning was looking out," as the word is, Judges 19:26, that is, "In the dawning of the day," as we read it. So the very dawning of grace, and good will to Christ, grace peeping out from under a mass of darkness in believers, is pleasant and acceptable to him, as the break of day is to the weary traveler.

Though the remains of unbelief make the hand of faith to shake and tremble; yet the Lord is so well pleased with it, that he employs it to carry away pardons and supplies of grace, from the throne of grace, and the fountain of grace. His faith was effectual, who "cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help you my unbelief!" Mark 9:24. Though the remains of sensual affections

make the flame of their love weak and smoky; he turns his eyes from the smoke, and beholds the flame, how fair it is, Song of Solomon 4:10, "How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse!" "The smell of their" under "garment" of inherent holiness, as imperfect as it is, "is like the smell of Lebanon," Song of Solomon 4:11; and that because they are covered with their elder brother's clothes, which makes the sons of God to "smell as a field which the Lord has blessed." Their good works are accepted: their cups of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lack a reward. Though they cannot offer for the tabernacle—gold, silver, and brass, and onyx stones—let them come forward with what they have: if it were but goats' hair, it shall not be rejected; if it were but ram's skins, they shall be kindly accepted; for they are dyed red, dipped by faith in the Mediator's blood, and so presented unto God. A very ordinary work done in faith, and from faith, if it were but the building of a wall about the holy city, is a great work, Nehemiah 6:3. If it were but the bestowing of a box of ointment on Christ, it shall never be forgotten, Matthew 26:13. Even "a cup of cold water only given to one of Christ's little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall be rewarded," Matthew 10:42. Nay, not a good word for Christ shall drop from their mouths—but it shall be registered in God's "book of remembrance," Malachi 3:16. Nor shall a tear drop from their eyes for him—but he will "put it in his bottle," Psalms 56:8. Their will is accepted for the deed; their sorrow for the lack of will, for the will itself, 2 Corinthians 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." Their groanings, when they cannot well express their desires, are heard in heaven; the meaning of those groans is well known there, and they will be returned like the dove with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. See Romans 8:26-27. Their mites are better than other men's talents. Their lisping and broken sentences are more pleasant to their Father in heaven, than the most fluent or flourishing speeches of those who are not in Christ. Their voice is sweet, even when they are ashamed it should be heard; their countenance is lovely, even when they blush, and draw a veil over it, Song of Solomon 2:14. The Mediator takes their petitions, blots out some parts, rectifies others, and then presents them to the Father, in consequence whereof they are accepted in the court of heaven.

Every true Christian is a temple to God. If you look for sacrifices, they are not lacking there; they offer the sacrifice of praise, and do good. With such sacrifices God is well pleased, Hebrews 13:15-16. Christ himself is the altar which sanctifies the gift, Hebrews 13:10. If we look for incense, it is there too. The graces of the Spirit are found in their hearts: and the Spirit of the crucified Christ fires them, and puts them in exercise; as the fire was brought from the altar of burnt-offering, to set the incense in flame: then they mount heavenward, like pillars of smoke, Song of Solomon 3:6. But the best of incense will leave ashes behind it; yes, indeed: but as the priest took away the ashes of the incense in a golden dish, and threw them out; so our great High Priest takes away the ashes and refuse of all the saint's services, by his mediation in their behalf.

8. An eighth benefit flowing from union with Christ, is PRESERVATION. The Christian cannot fall away—but must persevere unto the end; John 10:28, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Indeed, if a branch does not knit with the stock, it will fall away when shaking winds arise: but the branch knit to the stock stands fast whatever wind blows.

Sometimes a stormy wind of temptation blows from hell, and shakes the branches in Christ, the true vine: but their union with him is their security; moved they may be—but removed they never can be. The Lord "will with the temptation, also make a way of escape," 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Calms are never of any continuance; there is almost always some wind blowing; and therefore, branches are rarely altogether at rest. But sometimes violent winds arise, which threaten to rend them from off their stock. Even so it is with saints; they are daily put to it to keep their ground against temptation: sometimes the wind from hell rises so high, and blows so furiously, that it makes even top branches to sweep the ground; yet being knit to Christ their stock, they get up again, in spite of the most violent efforts of the prince of the power of the air. Psalms 94:18, "When I said, my foot slips, your mercy, O Lord, held me up." But the Christian improves by his trial; and is so far from being damaged, that he is benefitted by it, as it discovers what hold the soul has of Christ, and what hold Christ has of the soul. Look—as the wind in the bellows, which would blow out the candle, blows up the fire; even so it often comes to pass, that such temptations enliven the true Christian, awakening the graces of the Spirit in him; and by that means, discover both the reality and the strength of grace in him. And hence, as Luther, that great man of God, says, "One Christian, who has had experience of temptation, is worth a thousand others."

Sometimes a stormy wind of trouble and persecution from the men of the world, blows upon the vine, that is, mystical Christ; but union with the stock is a sufficient security to the branches. In a time of the church's peace and outward prosperity, while the angels hold the winds, that they blow not, there are a great many branches taken up and put into the stock, which never knit with it, nor live by it, though they are bound up with it by the bonds of external ordinances. Now, these may stand a while on the stock, and stand with great ease while the calm lasts; but when once the storms arise, and the winds blow, they will begin to fall off one after another; and the stronger the wind rises, the greater will the number be, which fall. Yes, some strong boughs of that sort, when they fall, will, by their weight, carry others of their own kind, quite down to the earth with them; and will bruise and press down some true branches in such a manner, that they would also fall off—were it not for that fast hold which the stock has of them. Then it is that many branches, which before were high and eminent, are found lying on the ground withered, and fit to be gathered up and cast into the fire, Matthew 13:6, "When the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had no root, they withered away." John 15:6, "If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." But however violently the winds blow, none of the truly engrafted branches which are knit with the stock are found missing, when the storm is changed into a calm, John 17:12, "Those whom you gave me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." The least twig growing in Christ shall persevere; when the tallest cedars growing on their own root, shall be laid flat on the ground, Romans 8:35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" See Romans 8:36-39. However severely spiritual Israel is "sifted—yet shall not the least grain," or, as it is in the original language, a little stone, "fall to the ground," Amos 9:9. It is an allusion to the sifting of fine pebble stones from among heaps of dust and sand: though the sand and dust falls to the ground, be blown away with the wind, and trampled under foot; yet there shall not fall to the ground so much as a little stone, such is the exactness of the sieve, and the care of the sifter. There is nothing more ready to fall on the earth than a stone: yet, if professors of religion be living stones, built on Christ, the chief corner-stone, although they be little stones, they shall not fall to the earth, whatever storm beats upon them. See 1 Peter 2:4-6.

All the good grain in the church of Christ is of this kind: they are stones, in respect of solidity; and living stones in respect of activity. If men are solid, substantial Christians, they will not be like chaff tossed to and fro with every wind. And if they are lively Christians, whose spirits will stir in them, as Paul’s did, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, Acts 17:16, they will not lie like stones, to be turned over, hither and there, cut and carved, according to the lusts of men; having so much of the stone, as leaves nothing of liveliness in them. Our God’s house is a great house, wherein are not only vessels of gold—but also of earth, 2 Timothy 2:20. Both these are apt to contract filthiness; and therefore, when God brings trouble upon the church, he has an eye to both. As for the vessels of gold, they are not destroyed; but purified by a fiery trial in the furnace of affliction, as goldsmiths refine their gold, Isaiah 1:25, "And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross." But destruction is to the vessels of earth; they shall be broken in shivers, as a potter’s vessel, Isaiah 1:28, "And the destruction," or breaking "of the transgressors, and of the sinners, shall be together." It seems to be an allusion to that law, for breaking the vessels of earth, when unclean; while vessels of wood, and consequently vessels of gold, were only to be rinsed, Leviticus 15:12.

01.03b MYSTICAL UNION between Christ and Believers2

9. A ninth benefit is SUPPORT. If you are a branch engrafted in Christ, the root supports you. The believer leans on Christ, as a weak woman in a journey leaning upon her beloved husband, Song of Solomon 8:5. He supports himself upon him, as a feeble old man stays himself on his staff, Isaiah 50:10. He rolls himself on him, as one rolls a burden he is not able to walk under, off his own back, upon another who is able to bear it, Psalms 22:8, marg. There are many weights to hang upon and press down the branches in Christ, the true vine. But you know, whatever weights hang on the branches, the stock bears all; it bears the branch, and the weight that is upon it too.

(1.) Christ supports believers in him, under a weight of outward troubles. That is a large promise, Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." See how David was supported under a heavy load, 1 Samuel 30:6. His city Ziglag was burnt, his wives were taken captives, his men spoke of stoning him: nothing was left him but his God and his faith; but by his faith, he encouraged himself in his God. The Lord comes, and lays his cross on his people's shoulders; it presses them down, and they are likely to sink under it, and therefore cry, "Master, save us, we perish!" But he supports them under their burden; he bears them up, and they bear their cross. Thus the Christian, with a weight of outward troubles upon him, goes lightly under his burden, having the everlasting arms underneath him. The Christian has a spring of comfort, which he cannot lose; and therefore never lacks something to support him.

If a man has all his riches in money, robbers may take these away; and then what more has he? But if the landed proprietor is robbed of his money—yet his lands remain for his support. Those who build their comfort on worldly goods, may quickly be comfortless; but those who are united to Christ shall find comfort, when all the streams of worldly enjoyments are dried up, Job 6:13, "Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?" That is, Though my substance is gone; though my servants, my children, my health, and soundness of body, are all gone; yet my grace is not gone! Though the Sabeans have driven away my oxen and donkeys, and the Chaldeans have driven away my camels; they have not driven away my faith, and my hope too: these are yet in me; they are not driven from me; so that by them I can fetch comfort from heaven, when I can have none from earth.

(2.) Christ supports his people under a weight of inward troubles and discouragements. Many times "heart and flesh fail them;" but then "God is the strength of their heart," Psalms 73:26. They may have a weight of guilt pressing them. This is a load that will make their backs bend, and their spirits sink: but he takes it off, and puts a pardon into their hand, while they cast their burden upon him. Christ takes the soul, as one marries a widow under a burden of debt: and so when the creditors come to Christ's spouse, she carries them to her husband, confesses the debt, declares she is not able to pay—and lays all upon him. The Christian sometimes, through carelessness, losses his sense of pardon; he cannot find it, however he searches for it. The law takes that opportunity, and proceeds against him for a debt paid already. God hides his face, and the soul is

distressed. Many arrows go through the heart now; many long accounts are laid before the man, which he reads and acknowledges. Often does he see the officers coming to apprehend him, and the prison door open to receive him. What else keeps him from sinking utterly under discouragements in this case—but the everlasting arms of a Mediator underneath him, and that he relies upon the great Surety.

Farther, they may have a weight of strong lusts pressing them. They have a body of death upon them. Death is a weight that presses the soul out of the body. A leg or an arm of death, if I may so speak, would be a terrible load. One lively lust will sometimes lie so heavy on a child of God, that he can no more remove it than a child could throw a giant from off him. How, then, are they supported under a whole body of death? Their support is from that root which bears them, from the everlasting arm that is underneath them. "His grace is sufficient for them," 2 Corinthians 12:9. The great stay of the believer is not the grace of God within him—that is a well whose streams sometimes run dry: but it is the grace of God without him—the grace that is in Jesus Christ; which is an ever-flowing fountain, to which the believer can never come amiss. For the apostle tells us in the same verse, it is "the power of Christ." "Most gladly therefore," says he, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," or "tabernacle above me," as the cloud of glory did on the Israelites, which God spread for a covering, or shelter, to them in the wilderness, Psalms 105:39; compare Isaiah 4:5-6. So that the believer in this combat, like the eagle, first flies aloft by faith, and then comes down on the prey, Psalms 34:5, "They looked to him—and were lightened."

Finally, they have a weight of weakness and wants upon them—but they "cast over that burden on the Lord," their strength, "and he sustains them," Psalms 55:22. With all their wants and weakness they are cast upon him; as the poor, weak, and naked babe coming out of the womb, is cast into the lap of its tender and affectionate mother, Psalms 22:10. Though they be destitute, as a shrub in the wilderness, which the foot of every beast may tread down, the Lord will regard and support them, Psalms 102:17. It is not surprising that the weakest plant should be safe in a garden: but our Lord Jesus Christ is a hedge for protection to his weak and destitute ones, even in a wilderness.

OBJECTION. "But if the saints be so supported, how is it that they fall so often under temptation and discouragements?

ANSWER. (1.) However low they fall at any time—they never fall off; and that is a great matter. They "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Peter 1:5. Hypocrites may fall, so as to fall off, and fall into the pit, as a bucket falls into a well when the chain breaks. But, though the child of God may fall, and that so low that the waters go over his head—yet there is still a bond of union between Christ and him; the chain is not broken: he will not go to the ground; he will be drawn up again, Luke 22:31-32, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

(2.) The falls of the saints flow from their not improving their union with Christ, their not making use of him by faith, for support or bearing them up, Psalms 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed." While the nurse holds the child in her arms, it cannot fall to the ground; yet if the unwary child is not held by her, it may fall backwards in her arms, to its great hurt. Thus David’s fall broke his bones, Psalms 51:8; but it did not break the bond of union between Christ and him: the Holy Spirit, the bond of that union, was not taken from him, Psalms 51:11.

10. The last benefit I shall name, is, the special care of the Farmer, John 15:1-2, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the farmer. Every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Believers, by virtue of their union with Christ, are the objects of God's special care and providence. Mystical Christ is God's vine; other societies in the world are but wild olive trees. The men of the world are but God's out-field; the saints are his vineyard, which he has a special propriety in, and a special concern for, Song of Solomon 8:12, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." He who slumbers not nor sleeps, is the keeper of it; he does keep it: lest any hurt it, he will keep it night and day; he, in whose hand is the dew of heaven, will water it every moment, Isaiah 27:3. He dresses and weeds it, in order to further its fruitfulness, John 15:2. He cuts off the unfruitful twigs, that mar the fruitfulness of the branch. This is done especially by the word, and by crosses or afflictions; the saints need the ministry of the word, as much as the vineyard needs one to dress and prune the vines, 1 Corinthians 3:9, "We are laborers together with God; you are God's husbandry, you are God's building." And they need the cross too, 1 Peter 1:6.

Therefore, if we were to reckon the cross among the benefits flowing to believers from their union with Christ, I judge that we should not reckon amiss. Sure I am, in their sufferings they "suffer with him," Romans 8:17. The assurances which they have of the cross, have rather the nature of a promise, than of a threatening, Psalms 89:30-33, "If his children forsake my law - then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail." This looks like a tutor's engaging to a dying father, to take care of the children left with him; and to give them both nurture and admonition for their good. The covenant of grace truly beats the spears of affliction into pruning-hooks, to them that are in Christ, Isaiah 28:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

Why, then, should we be angry with our cross? why should we be frightened at it? The believer must take up his cross, and follow his leader, the Lord Jesus Christ. He must take up his every-day's cross, Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Yes, he must take up holy day's cross too, Lamentations 2:22, "You have called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about." The church of the Jews had of a long time many a pleasant meeting at the temple, on solemn days, for the worship of God; but they got a solemnity of another nature, when God called together, about the temple and city, the Chaldean army, that burnt the temple, and laid Jerusalem in heaps. And as the church of God is yet militant in this lower region, how can it be but the clouds will return after the rain? But the cross of Christ, by which appellation the saint's troubles are named, is a kindly name to the believer.

It is a cross indeed; not to the believer's graces—but to his corruptions. The hypocrite's seeming grace may indeed breathe out their last on a cross, as those of the stony-ground hearers did, Matthew 13:6, "When the sun" of persecution, ver. 21, "was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away;" but never did one of the real graces in a believer die upon the cross yet. Nay, as the candle shines brightest in the night, and the fire burns fiercest in intense frost; so the believers graces are commonly most vigorous in a time of trouble.

There is a certain pleasure and sweetness in the cross, to those who have their senses exercised to discern, and to find it out. There is a certain sweetness in a man's seeing himself upon his trial for heaven, and standing candidate for glory. There is a pleasure in traveling over those

mountains, where the Christian can see the prints of Christ's own feet, and the footsteps of the flock, who have been there before him. How pleasant is it to a saint, in the exercise of grace, to see how a good God crosses his corrupt inclinations, and prevents his folly! How sweet is it to behold these thieves upon the cross! How refined a pleasure is there in observing how God draws away provision from unruly lusts, and so pinches them, that the Christian may get them governed! Truly, there is a paradise within this thorn-hedge.

Many a time the people of God are in bonds of sin; which are never loosed, until they are bound with cords of affliction. God takes them, and throws them into a fiery furnace—which burns off their bonds; and then, like the three children, Daniel 3:25, they are "free, walking in the midst of the fire." God gives his children a medicinal potion, with one bitter ingredient: if that will not work upon them, he will put in a second bitter ingredient, a third, and so on, as there is need, that they may work together for their good, Romans 8:28. With cross winds he hastens them to their labor. They are often found in such ways, as that the cross is the happiest thing that they can meet with: and well may they salute it as David did Abigail, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me," 1 Samuel 25:32.

Worldly things are often such a load to the Christian, that he moves but very slowly heavenward. God sends a wind of trouble, which blows the burden off the man's back; he then walks more speedily on his way, after God has removed some gilded earth from him, which was drawing his heart away from God, Zephaniah 3:12, "I will also leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."

It was an observation of a heathen moralist, that "no history makes mention of any man, who has been made better by riches." I doubt whether our modern histories can supply the defect of ancient histories in this point. But sure I am, many have been the worse for riches: thousands have been hugged to death in the embraces of a smiling world; and many good men have got wounds from outward prosperity, that must be cured by the cross. I remember to have read of one, who having an internal abscess, had in vain used the help of physicians: but being wounded with a sword, the infection drained out; and his life was saved by that accident, which threatened immediate death. Often have spiritual abscesses gathered in the bosoms of God's people, in time of outward prosperity, and been thus broken and drained by the cross. It is beneficial for believers to be healed by stripes; although they are usually so weak as to cry out for fear, at the sight of the pruning-knife, as if it were the destroying axe; and to think that the Lord is coming to kill them, when he is indeed coming to cure them.

I shall now CONCLUDE, addressing myself in a few words, first, to saints, and next to sinners. To you that are SAINTS, I say,

First, Strive to obtain and keep up sincere communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ; that is, to be still deriving fresh supplies of grace from the fountain which is in him, by faith: and making suitable returns of them, in the exercise of grace and holy obedience. Beware of estrangement between Christ and your souls. If it has gotten in already, which seems to be the case of many this day, endeavor to get it removed. There are multitudes in the world who slight Christ, though you should not slight him: many that looked fair for heaven, have turned their backs upon him. The warm sun of outward peace and prosperity has caused some to cast their cloak of religion from them, who held it fast when the wind of trouble was blowing upon them: and "Will you also go

away?" John 6:67. The basest ingratitude is stamped on your slighting communion with Christ, Jeremiah 2:31, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness? Why do my people say—We are lords, we will come no more unto you?" Oh! beloved, "Is this your kindness to your friend?" It is unfitting for any wife to slight converse with her husband—but her especially if she was taken from a prison or a ash-heap, as you were, by your Lord. It is not a time for you to be out of your prayer chambers, Isaiah 26:20.

Those who now are walking most closely with God, may have enough to do to stand when the trial comes: how hard will it be for others then, who are likely to be surprised with troubles, when guilt is lying on their consciences unremoved! To be awakened out of a sound sleep, and cast into a raging sea, as Jonah was, will be a fearful trial. To feel trouble before we see it coming; to be past hope before we have any fear—is a very sad case. Therefore break down your idols of jealousy, mortify those lusts, those irregular appetites and desires, that have stolen away your hearts, and left you like Samson without his hair, and say, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now," Hosea 2:7.

Secondly, Walk as befits those who are united to Christ. Prove your union with him by "walking as he also walked," 1 John 2:6. If you are brought from under the power of darkness, let your light shine before men. "Shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life;" as the lantern holds the candle, which being in it, shines through it, Php 2:15-16. Now you who profess Christ to be in you, let his image shine forth in your life, and remember that the business of your lives is to prove, by practical arguments, what you profess.

1. You know the character of a wife: "She who is married, cares how she may please her husband." Go—and do likewise; "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," Colossians 1:10. This is the great business of life; you must please him, though it should displease all the world. What he hates must be hateful to you, because he hates it. Whatever lusts come to gain your hearts, deny them, seeing the grace of God has appeared, teaching us so to do, and you are joined to the Lord. Let him be a covering to your eyes; for you have not your choice to make, it is made already; and you must not dishonor your head. A man takes care of his feet, because, if he catches cold there, it flies up to his head. "Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid," says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 6:14. Will you take that heart of yours, which is Christ's dwelling-place, and lodge his enemies there? Will you take that body, which is his temple, and defile it, by using the members thereof as instruments of sin?

2. Be careful to bring forth fruit, and much fruit. The branch well laden with fruit—is the glory of the vine, and of the farmer too, John 15:8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." A barren tree stands safer in a forest, than in an orchard; and branches in Christ, which do not bring forth fruit, will be taken away, and cast into the fire.

3. Be heavenly-minded, and maintain a holy contempt of the world. You are united to Christ; he is your head and husband, and is in heaven: therefore your hearts should be there also; Colossians 3:1, "If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." Let the serpent's seed go on their belly, and eat the dust of this earth: but let the members of Christ be ashamed to bow down, and feed with them.

4. Live and act dependently, depending by faith on Jesus Christ. That which grows on its own root, is a tree, not a branch. It is of the nature of a branch, to depend on the stock for all, and to derive all its sap from thence. Depend on Jesus for life, light, strength, and all spiritual benefits, Galatians 2:20, "I live—yet not I—but Christ lives in me; and the life which I live now in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." For this cause, in the mystical union, strength is united to weakness, that death and earth may mount up on borrowed wings. Depend on him for temporal benefits also; Matthew 6:11, "Give us this day our daily bread." If we have trusted him with our eternal concerns, let us be ashamed to distrust him in the matter of our provision in the world.

5. Be of a humble disposition, as being united to the meek Jesus. There is a prophecy to this purpose concerning the kingdom of Christ, Isaiah 11:6, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the lamb." It is an allusion to the beasts in Noah's ark. The beasts of prey that were accustomed to kill and devour others, when once they came into the ark, lay down in peace with them: the lamb was in no hazard from the wolf there, nor the lamb from the leopard. There was a beautiful accomplishment of it in the primitive church, Acts 4:32, "And the multitude of those who believed, were of one heart and of one soul." And this prevails in all the members of Christ, according to the measure of the grace of God in them.

Man is born naked: he comes naked into this world, as if God designed him for the picture of peace; and surely, when he is born again, he comes not into the new world of grace with claws to tear, a sword to wound, and a fire in his hand to burn up his fellow-members in Christ, because they cannot see with his light. Oh! it is sad to see Christ's lilies—as thorns in one another's sides; Christ's lambs devouring one another like lions, and God's diamonds cutting one another: yet it must be remembered, that sin is no proper cement for the members of Christ, though Herod and Pontius Pilate may be made friends that way. The apostle's rule is plain, Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." To follow peace no farther than our inclinations, credit, and such like things will allow us, is too short: to pursue it farther than holiness allows us, that is, conformity to the Divine will, is too far.

Peace is precious—yet it may be bought too dearly: therefore we must rather lack it—than purchase it at any expense of truth or holiness. But otherwise it cannot be bought too dearly; and it will always be precious in the eyes of the sons of peace. And now, SINNERS, what shall I say to you? I have given you some view of the privileges of those in the state of grace. You have seen them afar off; but alas! they are not yours, because you are not Christ's. The sinfulness of an unregenerate state is yours; and the misery of it is yours also: you have neither part nor lot in this matter. The guilt of all your sins lies upon you; you have no part in the righteousness of Christ. There is no peace to you, no peace with God, no true peace of conscience; for you have no saving interest in the great peace-maker. You are none of God's family; the adoption we spoke of, belongs not to you. You have no part in the Spirit of sanctification; and, in one word, you have no inheritance among those who are sanctified. All I can say to you in this matter, is, that the case is not desperate; these choice blessings may yet be yours, Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Heaven is proposing a union with earth still! The potter is making suit to his own clay! The gates of the city of refuge are not yet closed! O, that we could compel you to come in!

Thus far of the state of grace.

01.04 The Eternal State

IV. The ETERNAL State

1. Death

2. Difference between the righteous and the wicked in their death

3. Resurrection

4. Judgment

5. Heaven

6. Hell

01.04a Death

DEATH From Thomas Boston’s "Human Nature in its Fourfold State"

Section I. MAN’S LIFE IS VANITY

"For I know that you will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." Job 30:23.

I come now to discourse of man’s eternal state, into which he enters by death. Of this entrance, Job takes a solemn serious view, in the words of the text, which contain a general truth, and a particular application of it. The general truth is supposed; namely, that all men must, by death, remove out of this world; they must die. But where must they go? They must go to the house appointed for all living; to the grave, that darksome, gloomy, solitary house, in the land of forgetfulness. Wherever the body is laid up until the resurrection, there, as to a dwelling-house, death brings us home. While we are in the body, we are but in a lodging-house, in an inn, on our way homeward. When we come to our grave, we come to our home, our long home, Ecclesiastes 12:5.

All living must be inhabitants of this house, good and bad, old and young. Man’s life is a stream, running into death’s devouring deeps. Those who now live in palaces, must leave them, and go home to this house; and those who have not where to lay their heads, shall thus have a house at length. It is appointed for all, by Him whose counsel shall stand. This appointment cannot be shifted; it is a law which mortals cannot transgress. Job’s application of this general truth to himself, is expressed in these words: "For I know that you will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." He knew, that he must meet with death; that his soul and body must part; that God, who had set the time, would certainly see it kept. Sometimes Job was inviting death to come to him, and carry him home to its house; yes, he was in the hazard of running to it before the time- Job 7:15, "My soul chooses strangling, and death rather than my life." But here he considers God would bring him to it; yes, bring him back to it, as the word imports. Whereby he seems to intimate, that we have no life in this world, but as runaways from death, which stretches out its cold arms, to receive us from the womb- but though we do then narrowly escape its clutches, we cannot escape long; we shall be brought back again to it. Job knew this, he had laid it down as a certainly, and was looking for it.

I. ALL MUST DIE. Although this doctrine is confirmed by the experience of all former generations, ever since Abel entered into the house appointed for all living, and though the living know that they shall die, yet it is needful to discourse of the certainty of death, that it may be impressed on the mind, and duly considered.

Therefore consider,

1. There is an unalterable statute of death, under which all men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die," Hebrews 9:27. It is laid up for them, as parents lay up for their children- they may look for it, and cannot miss it; seeing God has designed and reserved it for them. There

is no peradventure in it; "we must die," 2 Samuel 14:14. Though some men will not hear of death, yet every man must see death, Psalms 89:48. Death is a champion all must grapple with- we must enter the lists with it, and it will have the mastery, Ecclesiastes 8:8, "There is no man that has power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death." Those indeed who are found alive at Christ's coming, shall all be changed, 1 Corinthians 15:51. But that change will be equivalent to death, will answer the purposes of it. All other people must go the common road, the way of all flesh.

2. Let us consult daily observation. Every man "sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and brutish person," Psalms 49:10. There is room enough on this earth for us, notwithstanding the multitudes that were upon it before us. They are gone, to make room for us; as we must depart, to make room for others. It is long since death began to transport men into another world, and vast multitudes are gone there already- yet the work is going on still; death is carrying off new inhabitants daily, to the house appointed for all living. Who has ever heard the grave say, It is enough! Long has it been getting, but still it asks. This world is like a great fair or market, where some are coming in, others going out; while the assembly that is in it is confusion, and the most part know not why they are come together; or, like a town situated on the road to a great city, through which some travelers have passed, some are passing, while others are only coming in, Ecclesiastes 1:4, "One generation passes away, and another generation comes- but the earth abides forever."

Death is an inexorable, irresistible messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders by the force of the mighty, the bribes of the rich, or the entreaties of the poor. It does not reverence the hoary head, nor pity the harmless babe. The bold and daring cannot outbrave it; nor can the faint-hearted obtain a discharge in this war.

3. The human body consists of perishing materials, Genesis 3:19, "Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels, easily broken in shivers. The soul is but basely housed, while in this mortal body, which is not a house of stone, but a house of clay, the mud walls cannot but molder away; especially seeing the foundation is not on a rock, but in the dust; they are crushed before the moth, though this insect be so tender that the gentle touch of a finger will destroy it, Job 4:19.

These materials are like gunpowder; a very small spark lighting on them will set them on fire, and blow up the house- the seed of a raison, or a hair in milk, having choked men, and laid the house of clay in the dust. If we consider the frame and structure of our bodies, how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; and on how regular and exact a motion of the fluids, and balance of humors, our life depends; and that death has as many doors to enter in by, as the body has pores; and if we compare the soul and body together, we may justly reckon, that there is somewhat more astonishing in our life, than in our death; and that it is more strange to see dust walking up and down on the dust, than lying down in it.

Though the lamp of our life may not be violently blown out, yet the flame must go out at length for lack of oil. What are those distempers and diseases which we are liable to, but death's harbingers, that come to prepare his way? They meet us, as soon as we set our foot on earth, to tell us at our entry, that we do but come into the world to go out again. Nevertheless, some are snatched away in a moment, without being warned by sickness or disease.

4. We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies– death follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. The wicked must die, by virtue of the threatening of the covenant of works, Genesis 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." And the godly must die too, that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death. Christ has taken away the sting of death, as to them; though he has not as yet removed death itself. Therefore, though it fastens on them, as the viper did on Paul's hand, it shall do them no harm- but because the leprosy of sin is in the walls of the house, it must be broken down, and all the materials thereof carried forth.

5. Man's life in this world, according to the Scripture account of it, is but a few degrees removed from death. The Scripture represents it as a vain and empty thing, short in its continuance, and swift in its passing away.

First, Man's life is a vain and empty thing- while it is, it vanishes away; and lo! it is not. Job 7:6, "My days are vanity." If we suspect afflicted Job of partiality in this matter, hear the wise and prosperous Solomon's character of the days of his life, Ecclesiastes 7:15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity," that is, my vain days. Moses, who was a very active man, compares our days to a sleep, Psalms 90:5, "They are as a sleep," which is not noticed until it is ended. The resemblance is just- few men have right apprehensions of life, until death awaken them; then we begin to know that we were living. "We spend our years as a tale that is told," Psalms 90:9. When an idle tale is telling it may affect a little; but when it is ended, it is remembered no more- and so is a man forgotten, when the fable of his life is ended. It is as a dream, or vision of the night, in which there is nothing solid; when one awakes, all vanishes; Job 20:8, "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yes, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." It is but a vain show or image; Psalms 39:6, "Surely every man walks in a vain show." Man, in this world, is but as it were a walking statue- his life is but an image of life, there is so much of death in it.

If we look on our life, in the several periods of it, we shall find it a heap of vanities. "Childhood and youth are vanity," Ecclesiastes 11:10. We come into the world the most helpless of all animals- young birds and beasts can do something for themselves, but infant man is altogether unable to help himself. Our childhood is spent in pitiful trifling pleasures, which become the scorn of our after thoughts. Youth is a flower that soon withers, a blossom that quickly falls off; it is a space of time in which we are rash, foolish, and inconsiderate, pleasing ourselves with a variety of vanities, and swimming as it were through a flood of them. But before we are aware it is past; and we are, in middle age, encompassed with a thick cloud of cares, through which we must grope; and finding ourselves beset with prickling thorns of difficulties, through them we must force our way, to accomplish the projects and contrivances of our riper thoughts. The more we solace ourselves in any earthly enjoyment we attain to, the more bitterness do we find in parting with it.

Then comes old age, attended with its own train of infirmities, labor, and sorrow, Psalms 90:10, and sets us down next door to the grave. In a word, "All flesh is like grass," Isaiah 40:6. Every stage or period in life, is vanity. "Man at his best state," his middle age, when the heat of youth is spent, and the sorrows of old age have not yet overtaken him, "is altogether vanity," Psalms 39:5. Death carries off some in the bud of childhood, others in the blossom of youth, and others when they are come to their fruit; few are left standing, until, like ripe corn, they forsake the ground- all die one time or other.

II. Man's life is a SHORT thing. It is not only a vanity, but a short-lived vanity. Consider,

1. How the life of man is reckoned in the Scriptures. It was indeed sometimes reckoned by hundreds of years- but no man ever arrived at a thousand, which yet bears no proportion to eternity. Now hundreds are brought down to scores; threescore and ten, or fourscore, is its utmost length, Psalms 90:10. But few men arrive at that length of life. Death does but rarely wait, until men be bowing down, by reason of age, to meet the grave. Yet, as if years were too big a word for such a small thing as the life of man on earth, we find it counted by months, Job 14:5. "The number of his months are with you." Our course, like that of the moon, is run in a little time- we are always waxing or waning, until we disappear. But frequently it is reckoned by days; and these but few, Job 14:1, "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days." No, it is but one day, in Scripture account; and that a hireling's day, who will precisely observe when his day ends, and give over his work, Job 14:6, "Until he shall accomplish as an hireling his day."

Yes, the Scripture brings it down to the shortest space of time, and calls it a moment, 2 Corinthians 4:17, "Our light affliction," though it last all our life long, "is but for a moment." Elsewhere it is brought down yet to a lower pitch, farther than which one cannot carry it, Psalms 39:5, "My age is as nothing before you." Agreeably to this, Solomon tells us, Ecclesiastes 3:2, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die"; but makes no mention of a time to live, as if our life were but a skip from the womb to the grave.

2. Consider the various SIMILITUDES by which the Scripture represents the shortness of man's life. Hear Isaiah, Isaiah 38:12, "My age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I am cut off like a weaver's shuttle." The shepherd's tent is soon removed; for the flocks must not feed long in one place; such is a man's life on this earth, quickly gone. It is a web which he is incessantly working; he is not idle so much as for one moment- in a short time it is wrought, and then it is cut off. Every breathing is a thread in this web; when the last breath is drawn, the web is woven out; he expires, and then it is cut off, he breathes no more.

Man is like grass, and like a flower, Isaiah 40:6. "All flesh," even the strongest and most healthy flesh, "is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." The grass is flourishing in the morning; but, being cut down by the mowers, in the evening it is withered- so man sometimes is walking up and down at ease in the morning, and in the evening is lying a corpse, being struck down by a sudden blow, with one or other of death's weapons. The flower, at best, is but a weak and tender thing, of short continuance wherever it grows- but observe, man is not compared to the flower of the garden; but to the flower of the field, which the foot of every beast may tread down at any time. Thus is our life liable to a thousand accidents every day, any of which may cut us off. But though we should escape all these, yet at length this grass withers, this flower fades by itself. It is carried off "as the cloud is consumed, and vanishes away," Job 7:9. It looks big as the morning cloud, which promises great things, and raises the expectation of the husbandman; but the sun rises, and the cloud is scattered; death comes, and man vanishes! The apostle James proposes the question, "What is your life?" James 4:14. Hear his answer, "It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away." It is frail, uncertain, and does not last. It is as smoke, which goes out of the chimney, as if it would darken the face of the heavens; but quickly it is scattered, and appears no more- thus goes man's life, and "where is he?" It is wind, Job 7:7, "O remember that my life is wind." It is but a passing blast, a short puff, "a wind that passes away, and comes not again," Psalms 78:39. Our breath is in our nostrils, as if it were always upon the wing to depart; ever passing and repassing, like a traveler, until it goes away, not to return until the

heavens be no more.

III. Man’s life is a SWIFT thing; not only a passing, but a flying vanity. Have you not observed how swiftly a shadow runs along the ground, in a cloudy and a windy day, suddenly darkening the places beautified before with the beams of the sun, but is suddenly disappearing? Such is the life of man on the earth, for "he flees as a shadow, and continues not," Job 14:2. A weaver’s shuttle is very swift in its motion; in a moment it is thrown from one side of the web to the other; yet "our days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle," Job 7:6. How quickly is man tossed through time, into eternity! See how Job describes the swiftness of the time of life, Job 9:25-26. "Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hastens to the prey." He compares his days with a runner, who runs speedily to carry tidings, and will make no stop. But though the runner were like Ahimaaz, who overrun Cushi, our days would be swifter than he; for they flee away, like a man fleeing for his life before the pursuing enemy; he runs with his utmost vigor, yet our days run as fast as he. But this is not all; even he who is fleeing for his life, cannot run always- he must needs sometimes stand still, lie down, or turn in somewhere, as Sisera did into Jael’s tent, to refresh himself- but our time never halts! Therefore it is compared to ships, that can sail night and day without intermission, until they reach their port; and to swift ships, ships of desire, in which men quickly arrive at their desired haven; or ships of pleasure, that sail more swiftly than ships of burden. Yet the wind failing, the ship’s course is checked- but our time always runs with a rapid course! Therefore it is compared to the eagle flying; not with his ordinary flight, for that is not sufficient to represent the swiftness of our days; but when he flies upon his prey, which is with an extraordinary swiftness. And thus, even thus, our days flee away.

Having thus discoursed of death, let us APPLY the subject in discerning the vanity of the world; in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience under all troubles and difficulties in it; in mortifying our lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, at all hazards, and in preparing for death’s approach.

I. Let us hence, as in a looking-glass, Behold the vanity of the world, and of all those things in it, which men so much value and esteem; and therefore set their hearts upon. The rich and the poor are equally intent upon gaining this world; they bow the knee to it; yet it is but a clay god- they court the bulky vanity, and run eagerly to catch this shadow. The rich man is hugged to death in its embraces; and the poor man wearies himself in the fruitless pursuit. What wonder if the world’s smiles overcome us, when we pursue it so eagerly, even while it frowns upon us! But look into the grave! O man! consider and be wise; listen to the doctrine of death; and learn,

1. that, "hold as hard as you can, you shall be forced to let go your hold of the world at length." Though you load yourself with the fruits of this earth; yet all shall fall off when you come to creep into your hole, the house, under ground, appointed for all living. When death comes, you must bid an eternal farewell to your enjoyments in this world- you must leave your goods to another; Luke 12:20, "And whose shall those things be which you have provided?"

2. Your portion of these things shall be very little before long. If you lie down on the grass, and stretch yourself at full length, and observe the print of your body when you rise, you may see how much of this earth will fall to your share at last. It may be you shall get a coffin, and a winding-sheet; but you are not sure of that; many who have had abundance of wealth, yet have

not had so much when they took up their new house in the land of silence. But however that be, more you cannot expect.

It was a sobering lesson, which Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard bearer, and ordered him to take his shroud upon a pole, and go out to the camp with it, and declare that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs, he had nothing now left him, but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial.

3. "This world is a false friend," who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do. When you are lying on a deathbed, all your friends and relatives cannot rescue you; all your substance cannot ransom you, nor procure you a reprieve for one day; no, not for one hour! Yes, the more you possess of this world's goods, your sorrow at death is likely to be the greater; for though one may live more commodiously in a palace than in a cottage, yet he may die more easily in the cottage, where he has very little to make him fond of life.

II. It may serve as a storehouse for Christian contentment and patience under worldly losses and crosses. A close application of the doctrine of death is an excellent remedy against fretting, and gives some ease to a troubled heart. When Job had sustained very great losses, he sat down contented, with this meditation, Job 1:21, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When Providence brings a mortality or disease among your cattle, how ready are you to fret and complain! but the serious consideration of your own death, to which you have a notable help from such providential occurrences, may be of use to silence your complaints, and quiet your spirits. Look to "the house appointed for all living," and learn,

1. That you must suffer a more severe tragedy than the loss of worldly goods. Do not cry out because of an illness in the leg or arm- for before long there will be a long home thrust at the heart. You may lose your dearest relations- the wife may lose her husband, and the husband his wife; the parents may lose their dear children and the children their parents; but if any of these trials happen to you, remember you must lose your own life at last; and "Why does a living man complain?" Lamentations 3:39. It is always profitable to consider, under affliction, that our case might have been worse than it is. Whatever is consumed, or taken from us, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we ourselves are not consumed," Lamentations 3:22.

2. It is but for a short space of time that we are in this world. It is but a little that our necessities require in so short a space of time; when death comes, we shall stand in need of none of these things. Why should men rack their heads with cares how to provide for tomorrow; while they know not if they shall then need anything? Though a man's provision for his journey be nearly spent, he is not disquieted, if he thinks he is near home. Are you working by candle light, and is there little of your candle left? It may be there is as little sand in your glass; and if so, you have little use for it.

3. You have matters of great weight that challenge your care. Death is at the door, beware that you lose not your souls. If blood breaks out at one part of the body, they often open a vein in another part of it, to turn the stream of the blood, and to stop it. Thus the Spirit of God sometimes cures men of sorrow for earthly things, by opening the heart-vein to bleed for sin. Did we pursue heavenly things more vigorously when our affairs in this life prosper not, we should thereby gain a double advantage- our worldly sorrow would be diverted, and our best treasure increased.

4. Crosses of this nature will not last long. The world’s smiles and frowns will quickly be buried together in everlasting forgetfulness. Its smiles go away like foam on the water; and its frowns are as a passing ache in a man’s side. Time flies away with swift wings, and carries our earthly comforts, and crosses too, along with it- neither of them will accompany us into "the house appointed for all living." "For in death the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Even prisoners are at ease in death, with no guards to curse them. Rich and poor are there alike, and the slave is free from his master." Job 3:17-19.

Cast a look into eternity, and you will see affliction here in this world, is but for a moment. The truth is, our time is so very short, that it will not allow either our joys or griefs to come to perfection. Therefore, let them "that weep be as though they wept not; and those who rejoice as though they rejoiced not," etc.,1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

5. Death will put all men on the same level. The king and the beggar must dwell in one house, when they come to their journey’s end; though their entertainment by the way may be very different. "The small and the great are there," Job 3:19. We are all in this world as on a stage; it is no great matter, whether a man acts the part of a prince or a peasant, for when they have acted their parts, they must both get behind the curtain, and appear no more.

6. If you are not in Christ, whatever your afflictions now be, "troubles a thousand times worse, are abiding you in another world." Death will turn your crosses into pure unmixed curses! and then, how gladly would you return to your former afflicted state, and purchase it at any rate, were there any possibility of such a return.

7. If you are in Christ, you may well bear your cross. Death will put an end to all your troubles. If a man on a journey is not well accommodated, where he lodges only for a night, he will not trouble himself much about the matter; because he is not to stay there, it is not his home. You are on the road to eternity! let it not distress you that you meet with some hardships in the ’inn of this world’. Fret not, because it is not so well with you as with some others. One man travels with a cane in his hand; his fellow traveler, perhaps, has but a common staff or stick- either of them will serve the turn. It is no great matter which of them be yours; both will be laid aside when you come to your journey’s end.

III. It may serve for a bridle, to curb all manner of lusts, particularly those conversant about the body. A serious visit made to cold death, and that solitary mansion, the grave, might be of good use to repress them.

(1.) It may be of use to cause men to cease from their INORDINATE CARE FOR THE BODY; which is to many the bane of their souls. Often do these questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and with what shall we be clothed?" leave no room for another of more importance, namely, "With what shall I come before the Lord?" The soul is put on the shelf, to answer these base questions in favor of the body; while its own eternal interests are neglected. But ah! why are men so busy to repair the ruinous cottage; leaving the inhabitant to bleed to death of his wounds, unheeded, unregarded? Why so much care for the body, to the neglect of the concerns of the immortal soul? O do not be so anxious for what can only serve your bodies; since, before long, the clods of cold earth will serve for back and belly too!

(2.) It may abate your pride on account of BODILY ENDOWMENTS, which vain man is apt to glory in. Value not yourselves on the blossom of youth; for while you are in your blooming years, you are but ripening for a grave; death gives the fatal stroke, without asking any body's age. Do not boast in your strength, it will quickly be gone- the time will soon be, when you shall not be able to turn yourselves on a bed; and you must be carried by your grieving friends to your long home. And what signifies your healthful constitution? Death does not always enter in soonest where it begins soonest to knock at the door; but makes as great dispatch with some in a few hours, as with others in many years. Do not value yourselves on your beauty, which "shall consume in the grave," Psalms 49:14. Remember the change which death makes on the fairest face, Job 14:20"You always overpower them, and then they pass from the scene. You disfigure them in death and send them away." Death makes the greatest beauty so loathsome, that it must be buried out of sight. Could a mirror be used in "the house appointed for all living," it would be a terror to those who now look oftener into their mirrors than into their Bibles. And what though the body be gorgeously arrayed? The finest clothes are but badges of our sin and shame; and in a little time will be exchanged for a shroud, when the body will become a feast to the worms!

(3.) It may be A CHECK UPON SENSUALITY AND FLESHLY LUSTS. 1 Peter 2:11, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire; and when the fire does take hold of it, it is soon extinguished. Sensuality makes men most unfit for divine communications, and is an effectual means to quench the Spirit. Intemperance in eating and drinking carries on the ruin of soul and body at once; and hastens death, while it makes the man most unfit for it. Therefore, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap." Luke 21:34 But O how often is the soul struck through with a dart, in gratifying the senses! At these doors destruction enters in. Therefore Job "made a covenant with his eyes," Job 31:1. "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit- he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein," Proverbs 22:14. "Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall," 1 Corinthians 10:12. Beware of lustful pleasure; study modesty in your apparel, words, and actions. The ravens of the valley of death will at length pick out the lustful eye- the obscene filthy tongue will at length be quiet, in the land of silence; and grim death, embracing the body in its cold arms, will effectually allay the heat of all fleshly lusts!

(4.) In a word, it may CHECK OUR EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS; and at once knock down "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Ah! if we must die why are we so fond of temporal things; so anxious to get them, so eager in the embraces of them, so mightily bothered with the loss of them?

Let me, upon a view of "the house appointed for all living," address the worldling in the words of Solomon. Proverbs 23:5, "Will you set your eyes upon that which is not?" For riches certainly make themselves wings, "they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." Riches, and all worldly things are but 'a lovely nothing'; they are that which is not. They are not what they seem to be- they are but gilded vanities, that deceive the eye.

Comparatively, they are not; there is infinitely more of nothingness and non-being, than of being, or reality, in the best of them. What is the world and all that is in it, but a fashion, or fair show, such as men make on the stage- a passing show? 1 Corinthians 7:31. Royal pomp is but gaudy show,

or appearance, in God’s account, Acts 25:23. The best name they get, is good things- but observe it, they are only the wicked man’s good things, Luke 16:25, "You in your lifetime received your good things," says Abraham, in the parable, to the rich man in hell. Well may the men of the world call these things their goods; for there is no other good in them, about them, nor attending them.

Now, will you set your eyes upon empty shadows and fancies? Will you cause your eyes to fly on them, as the word is? Shall men’s hearts fly out at their eyes upon them, as a ravenous bird on its prey? If they do, let them know, that at length these shall flee as fast away from them, as their eyes flew upon them- like a flock of fair-feathered birds, that settle on a fool’s ground; which, when he runs to catch them as his own, do immediately take wing, fly away, and sitting down on his neighbor’s ground, elude his expectation, Luke 12:20, "You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall these things be?"

Though you do not make wings to them, as many do; they themselves make wings, and fly away; not as a tame house-bird, which may be caught again; but as an eagle, which quickly flies out of sight, and cannot be recalled. Forbear then to seek these things. O mortal! there is no good reason to be given why you should set your eyes upon them. This world is a great inn, on the road to eternity, to which you are traveling. You are attended by those things, as servants belonging to the inn where you lodge- they wait upon you while you are there; and when you go away, they will convoy you to the door. But they are not yours, they will not go away with you; but return to wait on other strangers, as they did on you.

4. It may serve as a spring of CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION, to cleave to Christ, adhere to his truths, and continue in his ways; whatever we may suffer for so doing. It would much allay ’the fear of man, that brings a snare’. "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" Isaiah 51:12. Look on persecutors as pieces of brittle clay, that shall be dashed in pieces, for then shall you despise them as foes, that are mortal; whose terror to others in the land of the living, shall quickly die with themselves. The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, and the certainty of death, will teach us, that all the advantage which we can make by our seeking the world, is not worth the while; it is not worth going out of our way to get it- and what we refuse to forgo for Christ’s sake, may be quickly taken from us by death. But we can never lose it so honorably, as for the cause of Christ, and his gospel; for what glory is it, that you give up what you have in the world, when God takes it away from you by death, whether you will or not? This consideration may teach us to undervalue life itself, and choose to forgo it, rather than to sin. The worst that men can do, is to take away that life, which we cannot long keep, though all the world should conspire to help us to retain the spirit. If we refuse to offer it up to God when he calls for it in defense of his honor, he can take it from us another way; as it fared with him, who could not burn as a martyr for Christ, but was afterwards burned by an accidental fire in his house.

5. It may serve for a spur to INCITE US TO PREPARE FOR DEATH. Consider,

(1.) YOUR ETERNAL STATE WILL BE ACCORDING TO THE STATE IN WHICH YOU DIE- death will open the doors of heaven or hell to you. As the tree falls, so it shall lie through eternity. If the infant be dead born, the whole world cannot raise it to life again- and if one die out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, there is no more hope for him, forever.

(2.) SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WHAT IT IS TO GO INTO THE ETERNAL WORLD; a world of spirits, with which we are very little acquainted. How frightful is converse with spirits to poor mortals in this life! and how dreadful is the case, when men are hurried away into another world, not knowing but that devils may be their companions forever! Let us then give all diligence to make and advance our acquaintance with the Lord of that world.

(3.) IT IS BUT A SHORT TIME YOU HAVE TO PREPARE FOR DEATH- therefore now or never, seeing the time assigned for preparation will soon be over. Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might- for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go." How can we be idle, having so great a work to do, and so little time to do it in? But if the time is short, the work of preparation for death, though hard work, will not last long. The shadows of the evening make the laborer work cheerfully; knowing the time to be at hand, when he will be called in from his labor.

(4.) MUCH OF OUR SHORT TIME IS OVER ALREADY; and the youngest of us all cannot assure himself, that there is as much of his time to come, as is past. Our life in the world is but a short preface to long eternity; and much of the tale is told. Oh! shall we not double our diligence, when so much of our time is spent, and so little of our great work is done?

(5.) THE PRESENT TIME IS FLYING AWAY- and we cannot bring back time past, it has taken an eternal farewell of us- there is no kindling the fire again that is burned to ashes. The time to come is not ours- and we have no assurance of a share in it when it comes. We have nothing we can call ours, but the present moment; and that is flying away. How soon our time may be at an end, we know not. Die we must- but who can tell us when? If death kept one set time for all, we were in no hazard of a surprise- but daily observation shows us, that there is no such thing. The flying shadow of our life allows no time for loitering. The rivers run speedily into the sea, from where they came; but not so speedily as man to dust, from where he came. The stream of time is the swiftest current, and quickly runs out to eternity!

(6.) If once death carries us off, THERE IS NO COMING BACK to mend our matters, Job 14:14, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" Dying is a thing we cannot get a trial of; it is what we can only do once, Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die." And that which can be but once done, and yet is of so much importance that our all depends on our doing it right, we have need to use the utmost diligence that we may do it well. Therefore prepare for death.

If you who are unregenerate ask me, what you shall do to prepare for death, that you may die safely; I answer, I have told you already what must be done. Your nature and state must be changed- you must be united to Jesus Christ by faith. Until this is done, you are not capable of other directions, which belongs to a person’s dying comfortably.

Section II. The difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their Death.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous has hope in his death." Proverbs 14:32. This text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians; having a dark side towards the latter, and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh’s jailor, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison; the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be led to execution. It shows the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death; who, as they act a very different part in life, so, in death, have a very different exit.

I. As to the death of a WICKED man, here is,

1. The MANNER of his passing out of the world. He is "driven away;" namely, in his death, as is clear from the opposite clause. He is forcibly thrust out of his place in this world; driven away as chaff before the wind.

2. The STATE he passes away in. He dies also in a sinful and hopeless state.

A. In a sinful state- He is driven away in his wickedness. He lived in it, and he dies in it. His filthy garments of sin in which he wrapped up himself in his life are his prison garments, in which he shall lie wrapped up forever.

B. In a hopeless state- "but the righteous has hope in his death;" which plainly imports the hopelessness of the wicked in their death. Whereby is not meant, that no wicked man shall have any hope at all when he is dying, but shall die in despair. No- sometimes it is so indeed; but frequently it is otherwise; foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath. But the wicked man has no solid hope- as for the delusive hopes he entertains himself with, death will root them up, and he shall be forever irretrievably miserable. As to the death of a righteous man, he has hope in his death. This is ushered in with a "but," importing the removal of these dreadful circumstances, with which the wicked man is attended, who is driven away in his wickedness; but the godly are not so.

1. Not so, in the manner of their passing out of the world. The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind; but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried away by the angels into Abraham’s bosom, Luke 16:22.

2. Not so as to their state, when passing out of this life. The righteous man dies, not in a sinful, but in a holy state. He does not go away in his sin, but out of it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. Not in a hopeless, but a hopeful state. He has hope in his death; he has the grace of hope, and the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world- and though, the stream of his hope at death may run shallow, yet he has still so much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE 1. The WICKED dying, are driven away in their wickedness, and in a HOPELESS state. In speaking to this doctrine, I. I shall show how, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness" at death.

II. I shall prove the hopelessness of their state at death.

III. And then apply the whole.

I. How, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness." In discoursing of this matter, I shall briefly inquire, 1. What is meant by their being "driven away."

2. Why they shall be driven, and where.

3. In what respects they may be said to be driven away "in their wickedness." But before I proceed, let me remark, that you are mistaken if you think that no people are to be called wicked, but those who are avowedly vicious and profane; as if the devil could dwell in none but those whose name is

Legion. In Scripture account, all who are not righteous, in the manner hereafter explained, are reckoned wicked. Therefore the the text divides the whole world into two sorts- "the righteous and the wicked," and you will see the same thing in Malachi 3:18, "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked." Therefore if you are not righteous, you are wicked. If you have not an imputed righteousness, and also an implanted righteousness, or united to Christ by faith, however moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, you are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness- if death finds you in that state. Now,

1. As to the MEANING of this phrase, "driven away," there are three things in it; the wicked shall be taken away suddenly, violently, and irresistibly.

(1.) Unrenewed men shall be taken away SUDDENLY at death. Not that all wicked men die suddenly; nor that they are all wicked that die so; God forbid. But,

1. Death commonly comes upon them unexpectedly, and so surprises them, as the deluge surprised the old world, though they were forewarned of it long before it came; and as travail comes on a woman with child, with surprising suddenness, although looked for and expected, 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Death seizes them, as a creditor does his debtor, to drag him to prison, Psalms 55:15, and that when they are not aware. Death comes in, as a thief, at the window, and finds them full of busy thoughts about this life which that very day perish.

2. Death always seizes them unprepared for it; the old house falls down about their ears, before they have another provided. When death casts them to the door, they have not where to lay their heads; unless it be on a bed of fire and brimstone. The soul and body are as it were hugging one another in mutual embraces; when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them.

3. Death hurries them away in a moment to destruction, and makes a most dismal change- the man for the most part never knows where he is, until "in hell he lift up his eyes," Luke 16:23. The floods of wrath suddenly overwhelm his soul; and before he is aware, he is plunged into the bottomless pit!

(2.) The unrenewed man is taken away out of the world VIOLENTLY. Driving is a violent action; he is "chased out of the world," Job 18:18. Gladly would he stay, if he could; but death drags him away, like a malefactor to the execution. He sought no other portion than the profits and pleasures of this world- he has no other; he really desires no other- how can he then go away out of it, if he were not driven?

Question. "But may not a wicked man be willing to die?" Answer. He may indeed be willing to die; but observe it is only in one of three cases.

1. In a fit of passion, by reason of some trouble that he is impatient to be rid of. Thus, many people, when their passion has got the better of their reason, and when, on that account they are most unfit to die, will be ready to cry, "O to be gone!" But should their desire be granted, and death came at their call, they would quickly show they were not in earnest; and that, if they go, they must be driven away against their wills.

2. When they are brim-full of despair may they be willing to die. Thus Saul murdered himself; and Spira wished to be in hell, that he might know the uttermost of what he believed he was to suffer. In this manner men may seek after death, while it flees from them. But fearful is the violence these

undergo, whom the terrors of God do thus drive.

3. When they are dreaming of happiness after death. Foolish virgins, under the power of delusion, as to their state, may be willing to die, having no fear of lying down in sorrow. How many are there, who can give no scriptural ground for their hope, who yet have no bands in their death! Many are driven to darkness 'sleeping'- they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to; though the chariot in which they are, drives furiously to the depths of hell, yet they fear not, because they are fast asleep!

(3.) The unregenerate man is taken away IRRESISTIBLY. He must go, though sore against his will. Death will lake no refusal, nor admit of any delay; though the man has not lived half his days, according to his own computation. If he will not bow, it will break him. If he will not come forth, it will pull the house down about his ears; for there he must not stay. Although the physicians help, friends groan, the wife and children cry, and he himself use his utmost efforts to retain the spirit, his soul is required of him; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see light.

2. Let us consider, WHY they are driven, and WHERE. When the wicked die,

(1.) They are driven out of this world, where they sinned, into the other world, where they must be judged, and receive their particular sentences, Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." They shall no more return to their beloved earth. Though their hearts are wedded to their earthly enjoyments, they must leave them, they can carry nothing hence. How sorrowful must their departure be, when they have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them!

(2.) They are driven out of the society of the saints on earth, into the society of the damned in hell, Luke 16:22-23, "The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes." What a multitude of the devil's goats do now take place among Christ's sheep! but at death they shall be "led forth with the workers of iniquity," Psalms 125:5. There is a mixed multitude in this world, but no mixture in the other; each party is there set by themselves. Though hypocrites grow here as tares among the wheat, death will root them up, and they shall be bound in bundles for the fire.

(3.) They are driven out of time into eternity! While time lasts with them, there is hope; but when time goes, all hope goes with it. Precious time is now lavishly spent- it lies so heavy on the hands of many, that they think themselves obliged to take several ways to drive away time. But beware of being at a loss what to do in life- improve time for eternity, while you have it; for before long, death will drive it from you, and you from it, so as you shall never meet again.

(4.) They are driven out of their specious 'pretenses to piety'. Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word "hypocrite" properly signifies a stage-player, who appears to be what indeed he is not. This world is the stage on which these children of the devil impersonate the children of God. Their 'show of religion' is the player's coat, under which one must look, who will judge of them aright. Death turns them out of their coat, and they appear in their native dress- it unveils them, and takes off their mask! There are none in the other world, who pretend to be better than they really are. Depraved nature acts in the regions of horror, undisguised!

(5.) They are driven away from all means of grace; and are set beyond the line, quite out of all prospect of mercy. There is no more an opportunity to buy oil for the lamp; it is gone out at death, and can never be lighted again. There may be offers of mercy and peace made, after they are gone; but they are to others, not to them- there are no such offers in the place to which they are driven; these offers are only made in that place from which they are driven away.

3. In what respects may they be said to be driven away in their wickedness?

Answer 1. In respect of their being driven away in their sinful unconverted state. Having lived enemies to God, they die in a state of enmity to him- for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace in this life. The child that is dead in the womb, is born dead, and is cast out of the womb into the grave- so, "he who is dead while he lives", or is spiritually dead, is cast forth of the womb of time, in the same state of death, into the pit of utter misery. O miserable death, to die in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity! It had been incomparably better for such as die thus, that they had never been born!

Answer 2. In regard that they die sinning, acting wickedly against God, in contradiction to the divine law; for they can do nothing but sin while they live- so death takes them in the very act of sinning; violently draws them from the embraces of their lusts, and drives them away to the tribunal, to receive their sentence! It is a remarkable expression, Job 36:14, "They die in youth," the marginal reading is, "their soul dies in youth"- their lusts being lively, their desires vigorous, and expectations big, as is common in youth. "And their life is among the unclean;" or, "And the company" or herd "of them" dies "among the Sodomites," namely, is taken awny in the act of their sin and wickedness, as the men of Sodom were, Genesis 19:1-38; Luke 17:28-29.

Answer 3. As they are driven away, loaded with the guilt of all their sins; this is the winding-sheet that shall lie down with them in the dust, Job 20:11. Their works follow them into the other world; they go away with the yoke of their transgressions wreathed about their necks. Guilt is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences- but when death opens the way for sparks of divine vengeance, like fire, to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be, as it were, wrapped up forever!

Answer 4. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, in so far as they die under the absolute power of their wickedness. While there is hope, there is some restraint on the worst of men; those moral endowments, which God gives to a number of men, for the benefit of mankind in this life, are so many restraints upon the impetuous wickedness of human nature. But all hope being cut off, and these gifts withdrawn, the wickedness of the wicked will then arrive at its perfection. As the seeds of grace, sown in the hearts of the elect, come to their full maturity at death; so wicked and hellish dispositions in the reprobate, come then to their highest pitch! Their prayers to God will then be turned to horrible curses, and their praises to hideous blasphemies, Matthew 25:13, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This gives a dismal, but correct view of the state of the wicked in another world.

II. I shall discover the HOPELESSNESS of the state of unrenenewed men at death. It appears to be very hopeless, if we consider these four things.

1. Death cuts off their hopes and prospects of peace and pleasure in this life. Luke 12:19-20, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you- then who shall have those things which you have provided?" They look for great matters in this world, they hope to increase their wealth, to see their families prosper, and to live at ease; but death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him," Job 20:23. He may begin a web of contrivances for advancing his worldly interest; but before he gets it wrought out, death comes and cuts it off. "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalms 146:4.

2. When death comes, they have no solid ground to hope for eternal happiness. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?" Job 27:8. Whatever hopes they fondly entertain, they are not founded on God's word, which is the only sure ground of hope; if they knew their own case, they would see themselves only happy in a 'dream'. And indeed what hope can they have? The law is plain against them, and condemns them. The curses of it, those cords of death, are about them already. The Savior whom they slighted, is now their Judge; and their Judge is their enemy! How then can they hope? They have bolted the door of mercy against themselves, by their unbelief. They have despised the remedy, and therefore must die without mercy. They have no saving interest in Jesus Christ, the only channel of conveyance through which mercy flows- and therefore they can never taste it. The 'sword of justice' guards the door of mercy, so as none can enter in, but the members of the mystical body of Christ, over whose head is a covert of atoning blood, the Mediator's blood. These indeed may pass without a harm, for justice has nothing to require of them. But others cannot pass, since they are not in Christ- death comes to them with the sting in it- the sting of unpardoned guilt. It is armed against them with all the force which the sanction of a holy law can give it. 1 Corinthians 15:56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When that law was given on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly," Exodus 19:18. When the Redeemer was making satisfaction for the elect's breaking it, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," Matthew 27:51.

What possible ground of hope, then, is there to the wicked man, when death comes upon him armed with the force of this law? How can he escape that fire, which "burnt unto the midst of heaven?" Deuteronomy 4:11. How shall he be able to stand in that smoke, that "ascended up as the smoke of a furnace?" Exodus 19:18. How will he endure the terrible "thunders and lightnings," verse 16, and dwell in "the darkness, clouds, and thick darkness?" Deuteronomy 4:11. All these comparisons heaped together do but faintly represent the fearful tempest of wrath and indignation, which shall pursue the wicked to the lowest hell; and forever abide on those who are driven to darkness at death.

3. Death roots up their delusive hopes of eternal happiness; then it is that their covenant with death and agreement with hell, is broken. They are awakened out of their golden dreams, and at length lift up their eyes; Job 8:14, "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." They trust that all shall be well with them after death- but their trust is as a web woven out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art and industry. They wrap themselves up in their hope, as the spider wraps herself in her web. But it is a weak and slender defense; for however it may withstand the threatenings of the word of God; death, that broom of destruction, will sweep them

and it both away, so as there shall not be the least shred of it left; and he, who this moment will not let his hope go, shall next moment be utterly hopeless. Death overturns the house built on the sand; it leaves no man under the power of delusion.

4. Death makes their state absolutely and forever hopeless. Matters cannot be retrieved and amended after death. For,

1. Time once gone can never be recalled. If cries or tears, price or pains, could bring time back again, the wicked man might have hope in his death. But tears of blood will not prevail! Nor will his roaring for millions of ages cause it to return! The sun will not stand still for the sluggard to awake and enter on his journey; and when once it is gone down, he needs not expect the night to be turned into day for his sake- he must lodge through the long night of eternity, where his time left him.

2. There is no returning to this life, to amend what is amiss; it is a state of probation and trial, which terminates at death; therefore we cannot return to it again; it is but once we thus live, and once we die. Death carries the wicked man to "his own place," Acts 1:25. This life is our working day. Death closes our day and our work together. We may readily admit the wicked might have some hope in their death, if, after death has opened their eyes, they could return to life, and have but the trial of one Sabbath, one offer of Christ, one day, or but one hour more, to make up their peace with God- but "man lies down, and rises not until the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," Job 14:12.

3. In the other world, men have no access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved, though they be ever so desirous of it. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go," Ecclesiastes 9:10. Now a man may flee from the wrath to come; he may get into a refuge. But when once death has done its work, "the door is shut!" there are no more offers of mercy, no more pardons- where the tree is fallen, there it must lie.

Let what has been said be carefully pondered; and that it may be of use, let me exhort you,

First, To take heed that you entertain no hopes of heaven, but what are built on a solid foundation- tremble to think what fair hopes of happiness death sweeps away, like cobwebs; how the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be at the very threshold of heaven; how, in the moment they expected to be carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom, into the regions of bliss and peace; they are carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror!

I beseech you to BEWARE-

1. Of a hope built upon ground that was never cleared. The wise builder dug deep, Luke 6:48. Were your hopes of heaven never shaken; but have you had good hopes all your days? Alas for it! you may see the mystery of your case explained, Luke 11:21, When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are at peace. But if they have been shaken, take heed lest some breaches only have been made in the old building, which you have got repaired again, by ways and means of your own. I assure you, that your hope, however fair a building it is, is not fit to trust to, unless your old hopes have been razed, and you have built on a foundation quite new.

2. Beware of that hope which looks bright in the dark, but loses all its luster when it is set in the light of God's word, when it is examined and tried by the touchstone of divine revelation, John 3:20-21, "for every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does the truth, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." That hope, which cannot abide scripture trial, but sinks when searched into by sacred truth, is a delusion, and not a true hope- for God's word is always a friend to the graces of God's Spirit, and an enemy to delusion.

3. Beware of that hope, which stands without being supported by scriptural evidences. Alas! many are big with hopes, who cannot give, because they really have not, any scripture grounds for them. You hope that all will be well with you after death- but what word of God is it, on which you have been caused to hope? Psalms 119:49. What scriptural evidence have you to prove that yours is not the hope of the hypocrite? What have you, after impartial self-examination, as in the sight of God, found in yourself, which the word of God determines to be a sure evidence of his right to eternal life, who is possessed of it? Numbers are ruined with such hopes as stand unsupported by scriptural evidence. Men are fond and tenacious of these hopes; but death will throw them down, and leave the self-deceiver hopeless.

4. Beware of that hope of heaven, which does not prepare and dispose you for heaven, which never makes your soul more holy, 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the most part of men, is rather a hope to be free from pain and torment in another life; than a hope of true happiness, the nature whereof is not understood and discerned. Therefore it rests in sloth and indolence, and does not excite to mortification and a heavenly life. So far are they from hoping aright for heaven, that they must own, if they speak their genuine sentiments, removing out of this world into any other place whatever, is rather their fear than their hope. The glory of the heavenly city does not at all draw their hearts upwards to it, nor do they lift up their heads with joy, in the prospect of arriving at it. If they had the true hope of the marriage day, they would, as the bride, the "Lamb's wife," be "making themselves ready for it," Revelation 19:7. But their hopes are produced by their sloth, and their sloth is nourished by their hopes. Oh, Sirs, as you would not be driven away helpless in your death, beware of these hopes! Raze them now, and build on a new foundation, lest death leave not one stone of them upon another, and you never be able to hope any more.

Secondly, Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life, if you would not at death be driven away in your wickedness! Remember the fatal end of the wicked as the text represents it. I know there is a great difference in the death of the wicked, as to some circumstances- but ALL of them, in their death, agree in this, that they are driven away in their wickedness. Some of them die resolutely, as if they scorned to be afraid; some in raging despair, so filled with horror that they cry out as if they were already in hell; others in sullen despondency, oppressed with fears, so that their hearts sink within them, at the remembrance of misspent time, and the view which they have of eternity, having neither head nor heart to do anything for their own relief. And others die stupidly; they live like beasts, and they die like beasts, without any concern on their spirits, about their eternal state. They groan under their bodily distress but have no sense of the danger of their soul! One may, with almost as much prospect of success, speak to a stone, as speak to them; vain is the attempt to teach them; nothing that can be said moves them. To discourse to them, either of the joys of heaven on the torments of hell, is

to plough on a rock, or beat the air. Some die like the foolish virgins, dreaming of heaven; their foreheads are steeled against the fears of hell, with presumptuous hopes of heaven. The business of those who would be useful to them, is not to answer doubts about the case of their souls, but to discover to them their own false hopes. But which way soever the unconverted man dies, he is "driven away in his wickedness."

O dreadful case! Oh, let the consideration of so horrid a departure out of this world, move you to flee to Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient Savior, an almighty Redeemer. Let it prevail to drive you out of your wickedness, to holiness of heart and life. Though you reckon it pleasant to live in wickedness, yet you cannot but own, it is bitter to die in it. And if you leave it not in time, you must go on in your wickedness to hell, the proper place of it, that it may be set there on its own base. For when you are passing out of this world, all your sins, from the first to the last of them, will swarm about you, hang upon you, accompany you to the other world, and, as so many furies, surround you there forever.

Thirdly, O be concerned for others, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. What would you not do to prevent any of your friends dying an untimely and violent death? But, alas! do you not see them in hazard of being driven away in their wickedness! Is not death approaching them, even the youngest of them? And are they not strangers to true Christianity, remaining in that state which they came into the world? Oh! make haste to pluck the brand out of the fire, lest it be burned to ashes! The death of relations often leaves a sting in the hearts of those they leave behind them, because they did not do for their souls as they had opportunity; and because the opportunity is forever taken out of their hands.

01.04a Death CONTD

Doctrine II.

The state of the GODLY in death is a HOPEFUL state.

We have seen the dark side of the cloud looking towards ungodly men, passing out of the world; let us now take a view of the bright side of it, shining on the godly, as they enter on their eternal state. In discoursing on this subject, I shall confirm this doctrine, answer an objection against it, and then make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. For CONFIRMATION, let it be observed, that although the passage out of this world by death has a frightful aspect to poor mortals, and to miscarry in it must needs be of fatal consequence; yet the following circumstances make the state of the godly in their death, happy and hopeful.

1. They hare a trusty good Friend before them in the other world. Jesus Christ, their best Friend, is Lord of the land to which death carries them. When Joseph sent for his father to come down to him to Egypt, telling him, "God had made him lord over all Egypt," Genesis 45:9, "And Jacob "saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived," Genesis 45:27. He resolves to undertake the journey.

I think, when the Lord calls a godly man out of the world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, he has faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the 'wagon of death' which comes to carry him there. It is true, indeed, he has a weighty trial to undergo- after death the judgment. But the case of the godly is altogether hopeful; for the Lord of the land is their husband, and their husband is the judge. "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22. Surely the case of the wife is hopeful, when her own husband is her judge, even such a husband as hates divorce. No husband is so loving and so tender of his spouse, as the Lord Christ is of his. One would think it would be a very bad land, which a wife would not willingly go to, where her husband is the ruler and judge.

Moreover, their judge is the advocate, 1 John 2:1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Therefore they need not fear their being put back, and falling into condemnation. What can be more favorable? Can they think, that he who pleads their cause, will himself pass sentence against them?

Yet further, their advocate is their Redeemer; they are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Peter 1:18-19. So when he pleads for them, he is pleading his own cause. Though an advocate may be careless of the interest of one who employs him, yet surely he will do his utmost to defend his own right, which he has purchased with his money- and shall not their advocate defend the purchase of his own blood? But more than all that, their Redeemer is their head, and they are his members, Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 5:30. Though one were so silly as to let his own purchase go, without standing up to defend his right, yet surely he will not part with a limb of his own body. Is not their case then hopeful in death, who are so closely linked and allied to the Lord

of the other world, who are "the keys of hell and of death?"

2. They shall have a safe passage to another world. They must indeed go through "the valley of the shadow of death;" but though it be in itself a 'dark and shady valley', it shall be a 'valley of hope' to them- they shall not be driven through it, but be as men in perfect safety, who fear no evil, Psalms 23:4.

Why should they thus fear? They have the Lord of the land's safe conduct, his pass sealed with his own blood; namely, the blessed covenant, which is the saint's death-bed comfort, 2 Samuel 23:5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure- for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Who then can harm them? It is safe riding in Christ's chariot, Song of Solomon 3:9, both through life and death. They have good and honorable attendants- a guard, even a guard of angels. These encamp about them in the time of their life; and surely will not leave them in the day of their death. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on their Lord's bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house. When friends in mournful mood stand by the saint's bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for by angels, to be carried into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. The captain of the saint's salvation is the captain of this holy guard- he was their guide even unto death, and he will be their guide through it too, Psalms 23:4, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me." They may, without fear, pass that 'river', being confident it shall not overflow them; and they may walk through that 'fire', being sure they shall not be burnt by it.

Death can do them no harm! It cannot even hurt their bodies- for though it separate the soul from the body, it cannot separate the body from the Lord Jesus Christ. Even death is to them but 'sleep in Jesus', 1 Thessalonians 4:14. They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust; laid up in the grave as in their Lord's cabinet. They lie in a grave 'mellowing', as precious fruit laid up to be brought forth to him at the resurrection. The husbandman has corn in his barn, and corn lying in the ground- the latter is more precious to him than the former, because he looks to get it returned with increase. Even so the dead bodies of the saints are valued by their Savior- they are "sown in corruption," to be "raised in incorruption"; "sown in dishonor," to be "raised in glory," 1 Corinthians 15:42-43. It cannot hurt their souls. It is with the souls of the saints at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage, whereof we have the history, Acts 27:1-44. The ship was broken to pieces, but the passengers got all safe to land. When the dying saint's speech is stopped, his eyes set, and his last breath drawn, the soul gets safe away into the heavenly paradise, leaving the body to return to its earth, but in the joyful hope of a reunion at its glorious resurrection. But how can death hurt the godly? It is a foiled enemy- if it casts them down, it is only that they may rise more glorious. "Our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death," 2 Timothy 1:10. The soul and life of it is gone- it is but a 'walking shadow' that may fright, but cannot hurt saints- it is only the 'shadow of death' to them- it is not the thing itself; their dying is 'but as dying', or 'somewhat like dying'. The apostle tells us, "It is Christ that died," Romans 8:34. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, though stoned to death, yet only 'fell asleep', Acts 7:60. Certainly the nature of death is quite changed, with respect to the saints. It is not to them, what it was to Jesus Christ their head- it is not the venomed ruining thing, wrapped up in the sanction of the first covenant, Genesis 2:17, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." It comes to the godly without a sting- they may meet it with that salutation, "O death, where is your sting?" Is this

Mara? Is this 'bitter' death? It went out full into the world, when the first Adam opened the door to it, but the second Adam has brought it again empty to his own people.

I feel a sting, may the dying saint say- yet it is but a bee sting, slinging only through the skin- but, O death, where is your sting, your old sting, the serpent's sting, that stings to the heart and soul? The sting of death is sin- but that is taken away. If death arrests the saint, and carries him before the Judge, to answer for the debt he contracted, the debt will be found paid by the glorious Surety; and he has the discharge to show. The thorn of guilt is pulled out of the man's conscience; and his name is blotted out of the black roll, and written among the living in Jerusalem.

It is true, it is a great journey through the valley of the shadow of death- but the saint's burden is taken away from his back, his iniquity is pardoned, he may walk at ease- "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast," the redeemed may walk at leisure there, free from all apprehensions of danger.

3. They shall have a joyful entrance into the other world. Their arrival in the regions of bliss, will be celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer. A dying day is a good day to a godly man. Yes, it is his best day; it is better to him than his birth-day, or than the most joyous day which he ever had on earth. "A good name," says the wise man, is "better than precious ointment- and the day of death, than the day of one's birth," Ecclesiastes 7:1. The notion of the immortality of the soul, and of future happiness, which obtained among some pagan nations, had wonderful effects on them. Some of them, when they mourned for the dead, did it in women's apparel; that, being moved with the indecency of the garb, they might the sooner lay aside their mourning. Others buried them without any lamentation or mourning; but had a sacrifice, and a feast for friends, upon that occasion. Some were used to mourn at births, and rejoice at burials. But the practice of some Indian nations is yet more strange, where, upon the husband's decease, his wife, or wives, with a cheerful countenance, enter the flames prepared for the husband's corpse. But however false notions of a future state, assisted by pride, affectation of applause, apprehensions of difficulties in this life, and such like principles proper to depraved human nature, may influence crude uncultivated minds, when strengthened by the arts of hell; O what solid joy and consolation may they have, who are true Christians, being in Christ, who "has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!" 2 Timothy 1:10. Death is one of those "all things," that "work together for good to those who love God," Romans 8:28. When the body dies, the soul is perfected- the 'body of death' goes off at the 'death of the body'.

What harm did the jailer to Pharaoh's butler, when he opened the prison door to him, and let him out? Is the bird in worse case, when at liberty, than when confined in a cage? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of the saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man, as Haman came to Mordecai, with the royal apparel and the horse, Esther 6:11, with commission to do them honor, however awkwardly it be performed. I question not but Haman performed the ceremony with a very ill mien, a pale face, a downcast look, and a cloudy countenance, and like one who came to hang him, rather than to honor him. But he whom the king delighted to honor, must be honored; and Haman, Mordecai's grand enemy, must be the man employed to put this honor upon him. Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer, our Savior, our Mediator, by whose death, 'grim devouring death' is made to do such a good office to those whom it might otherwise have hurried away in their wickedness, to utter and eternal destruction! A dying day is, in itself, a

joyful day to the godly; it is their redemption day, when the captives are delivered, when the prisoners are set free. It is the day of the pilgrims coming home from their pilgrimage; the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels, to their own country, and their Father's house; and enter into actual possession of the glorious inheritance. It is their marriage day- now is the time of espousals; but then the marriage is consummated, and a marriage feast begun, which has no end. If so, is not the state of the godly in death, a hopeful state?

II. Objection- "But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope?"

Answer- It must be owned, that saints do not all die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them, as well as among the wicked; yet the worst case of a dying saint is indeed a hopeful one. Some die triumphantly, in a fnli assurance of faith. 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." They get a taste of the joys of heaven, while here on earth; and begin the songs of Zion, while yet in a strange land.

Others die in a solid dependence of faith on their Lord and Savior- though they cannot sing triumphantly, yet they can, and will say confidently, "The Lord is their God." Though they cannot triumph over death, with old Simeon, having Christ in his arms, and saying, "Lord now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word- for my eyes have seen your salvation," Luke 2:29-30; yet they can say with dying Jacob, "I have waited for your salvation, Lord," Genesis 49:18. His left hand is under their head, to support them, though his right hand does not embrace them- they firmly believe, though they are not filled with joy in believing. They can plead the covenant, and hang by the promise, although their house is not so with God as they could wish. But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned in Zechariah 14:7, "Not day, nor night." They may die under great doubts and fears; setting as it were in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist. They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their spirit of heaviness, until death strips them of it. They may be carried to heaven through the confines of hell; and may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new Jerusalem; and may be compared to a ship almost wrecked in sight of the harbor, which yet gets safe into her port, 1 Corinthians 3:15, "If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss- but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." There is safety amid their fears, but danger in the wicked's strongest confidence; and there is a blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows- "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," Psalms 97:11.

Now, saints are liable to such perplexity in their death, because, though they are Christians indeed, yet they are men of like passions with others; and death is a frightful object in itself, whatever dress it appears in- the stern countenance with which it looks at mortals, can hardly fail of causing them to shrink. Moreover, the saints are of all men the most jealous of themselves. They think of eternity, and of a tribunal, more deeply than others do; with them it is a more serious thing to die, than the rest of mankind are aware of. They know the deceits of the heart, the subtleties of depraved human nature, better than others do. Therefore they may have much to do to keep up hope on a death-bed; while others pass off quietly, like sheep to the slaughter; and the rather, that Satan, who uses all his art to support the hopes of the hypocrite, will do his utmost to mar the peace, and increase the fears, of the saint. And finally, the bad frame of spirit, and ill

condition, in which death sometimes seizes a true Christian, may cause this perplexity. By his being in the state of grace, he is indeed always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is ensured- but yet there is more necessary to his actual preparation and dying comfortably, his spirit must be in good condition too.

Therefore there are three cases, in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God-

1. If it seizes him at a time when the guilt of some particular sin, unrepented of, is lying on his conscience- and death comes on that very account, to take him out of the land of the living; as was the case of many of the Corinthian believers, 1 Corinthians 11:30, "For this cause," namely, of unworthy communicating, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." If a person is surprised with the approach of death, while lying under the guilt of some unpardoned sin, it cannot but cause a mighty consternation.

2. When death catches him napping. The midnight cry must be frightful to sleeping virgins. The man who lies in a ruinous house, and awakes not until the timbers begin to crack, and the stones to drop down about his ears, may indeed get out of it safely, but not without fears of being crushed by its fall. When a Christian has been going on in a course of security and backsliding, and awakens not until death comes to his bedside, it is no wonder that he gets a fearful awakening.

3. When he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet death without some evidences of a title to eternal life at hand; hard to go through the dark valley without the candle of the Lord shining upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall land, whether in heaven or hell.

Nevertheless the state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful. The presumptuous hopes of the ungodly, in their death, cannot make their state hopeful; neither can the fears of a saint make his state hopeless- for God judges according to the truth of the thing, not according to men’s opinions about it. Therefore the saints can be no more altogether without hope, than they can be altogether without faith. Their faith may be very weak, but it fails not; and their hope very low, yet they will, and do hope to the end. Even while the godly seem to be carried away with the stream of doubts and fears, there remains still as much hope as determines them to lay hold on the tree of life that grows on the banks of the river. Jonah 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of your sight- yet I will look again toward your temple."

USE-

This speaks comfort to the godly against the fear of death. A godly man may be called a happy man before his death, because, whatever befalls him in life, he shall certainly be happy at death. You who are in Christ, who are true Christians, have hope in your end; and such a hope as may comfort you against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour. This I shall branch out, in answering some cases briefly-

Case 1- "The prospect of death," will some of the saints say, "is uneasy to me, not knowing what shall become of my family when I am gone."

Answer. The righteous has hope in his death, as to his family, as well as himself. Although you have little, for the present, to live upon; which has been the condition of many of God's chosen ones, 1 Corinthians 4:11, "We," namely, the apostles, "both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;" and though you have nothing to leave them, as was the case of that son of the prophets, who feared the Lord, and yet died in debt which he was unable to pay, as his poor widow represents, 2 Kings 4:2; yet you have a good Friend to leave them to; a covenant God, to whom you may confidently commit them. "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in me." Jeremiah 49:11. The world can bear witness of signal settlements made upon the children of providence; such as by their pious parents have been cast upon God's providential care. It has been often remarked, that they lacked neither provision nor education. Moses is an eminent instance of this. He, though he was an outcast infant, Exodus 2:3, yet became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Acts 7:22, and became king in Jeshurun, Deuteronomy 33:5. O! may we not be ashamed, that we do not confidently trust him with the concerns of our families, to whom, as our Savior and Redeemer, we have committed our eternal interests?

Case 2- "Death will take us away from our dear friends; yes, we shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, in the blessed ordinances."

Answer- It will take you to your best Friend, the Lord Christ. The friends you leave behind you, if they be indeed people of worth, you will meet again, when they come to heaven, and you will never be separated any more. If death takes you away from the temple below, it will carry you to the temple above. It will indeed take you from the streams, but it will set you down by the fountain. If it puts out your candle, it will carry you where there is no night, where there is an eternal day.

Case 3- "I have so much to do, in time of health, to satisfy myself as to my interest in Christ, about my being a real Christian, a regenerate man, that I judge it is almost impossible I should die comfortably."

Answer- If it is thus with you, then double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Endeavor to grow in knowledge, and walk closely with God- be diligent in self-examination; and pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whereby you may know the things freely given you of God. If you are enabled, by the power and Spirit of Christ, thus diligently to prosecute your spiritual concerns, though the time of your life be neither day nor night, yet at evening time it may be light.

Many weak Christians indulge doubts and fears about their spiritual state, as if they placed at least some part of religion in their imprudent practice; but towards the end of life, they think and act in another manner. The traveler, who reckons that he has time to spare, may stand still debating with himself, whether this or the other be the right way- but when the sun begins to set, he is forced to lay aside his scruples, and resolutely to go forward in the road which he judges to be the right one, lest he lie all night in the open fields. Thus some Christians, who perplex themselves much, throughout the course of their lives, with jealous doubts and fears, content themselves when they come to die, with such evidences of the safety of their state, as they could not be satisfied with before; and by disputing less against themselves, and believing more, court the peace they formerly rejected, and gain it too.

Case 4- "I am under a sad decay, in respect of my spiritual condition."

Answer- Bodily consumptions may make death easy- but it is not so in spiritual decays. I will not say, that a godly man cannot be easy in such a case, when he dies, but I believe it is rarely so. Ordinarily, I suppose a cry comes to awaken sleeping virgins, before death comes. Samson is set to grind in the prison, until his locks grow again. David and Solomon fell under great spiritual decays; but before they died, they recovered their spiritual strength and vigor. However, bestir yourselves without delay, to strengthen the things that remain- your fright will be the less, for being awakened from spiritual sleep before death comes to your bedside- and you ought to lose no time, seeing you know not how soon death may seize you.

Case 5- "It is terrible to think of the other world, that world of spirits, which I have so little acquaintance with."

Answer- Your best friend is Lord of that other world. Abraham’s bosom is kindly even to those who never saw his face. After death, your soul becomes capable of converse with the blessed inhabitants of that other world. The spirits of just men made perfect, were once such as your spirit now is. And as for the angels, however superior their nature in the rank of beings, yet our nature is dignified above theirs, in the man Christ, and they are all of them your Lord’s servants, and so your fellow-servants.

Case 6- "The pangs of death are terrible."

Answer- Yet not so terrible as pangs of conscience, caused by a piercing sense of guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath, with which I suppose them to be not altogether unacquainted. But who would not endure bodily sickness, that the soul may become sound, and every whit whole? Each pang of death will set sin a step nearer the door; and with the last breath, the body of sin will breathe out its last. The pains of death will not last long; and the Lord your God will not leave, but support you under them.

Case 7- "But I am likely to be cut off in the midst of my days."

Answer- Do not complain, you will be the sooner at home- you thereby have the advantage of your fellow-laborers, who were at work before you in the vineyard. God, in the course of his providence, hides some of his saints early in the grave, that they may be taken away from the evil to come. An early removal out of this world, prevents much sin and misery. They have no ground of complaint, who get the residue of their years in Immanuel’s land. Surely you shall live as long as you have work cut out for you by the great Master, to be done for him in this world- and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.

Case 8- "I am afraid of sudden death."

Answer- You may indeed die so. Good Eli died suddenly, 1 Samuel 4:18. Yet death found him watching, 1 Samuel 4:13. "Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour the Lord does come," Matthew 24:42. But be not afraid, it is an inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch you out of Christ; and therefore can never seize you, as a jailor, to hurry you into the prison of hell. Sudden death may hasten and facilitate your passage to heaven, but can do you no prejudice.

Case 9- "I am afraid it will be my lot to die lacking the exercise of reason."

Answer- I make no question but a child of God, a true Christian, may die in this case. But what harm? There is no hazard in it, as to his eternal state- a disease at death may divest him of his reason, but not of his religion. When a man, going on a long voyage, has put his affairs in order, and put all his goods aboard, he himself may he carried on board the ship sleeping- all is safe with him, although he knows not where he is, until he awake in the ship. Even so the godly man, who dies in this case, may die uncomfortably, but not unsafely.

Case 10- "I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death are terrible to me."

Answer- The less you think on death, the thoughts of it will be the more frightful- make it familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby quiet your fears. Look at the white and bright side of the cloud- take faith's view of the city that has foundations; so shall you see hope in your death. Be duly affected with the body of sin and death, the frequent interruptions of your communion with God, and with the glory which dwells on the other side of death- this will contribute much to remove slavish fear.

It is a pity that saints should be so fond of life as they often are- they ought to be always on good terms with death. When matters are duly considered, it might be well expected that every child of God, every regenerate man, should generously profess concerning this life, what Job did, Job 7:16, "I loath it, I would not live always." In order to gain their hearts to this desirable temper, I offer the following additional considerations.

I. Consider the SINFULNESS that attends life in this world. While you live here, you sin, and see others sinning. You breathe infectious air. You live in pest-house. Is it at all strange to loathe such a life?

1. Your own plague sores are running on you. Does not the sin of your nature make you groan daily? Are you not sensible, that though the cure is begun, it is far from being perfected? Has not the leprosy got into the walls of the house, which cannot be removed without pulling it down? Is not your nature so vitiated, that no less than the separation of the soul from the body can root out the disease? Have you not your sores without, as well as your sickness within? Do you not leave marks of your pollution on whatever passes through your hands? Are not all your actions tainted and blemished with defects and imperfections? Who, then, should be much in love with life, but such whose sickness is their health, and who glory in their shame?

2. The loathsome sores of others are always before your eyes, go where you will. The follies and wickedness of men are everywhere conspicuous, and make but an unpleasant scene. This sinful world is but an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous.

3. Are not your own sores often breaking out again after healing? Frequent relapses may well cause us remit of our fondness for this life. To be ever struggling, and anon falling into the mire again, makes weary work. Do you never wish for cold death, thereby effectually to cool the heat of these lusts, which so often take fire again, even after a flood of godly sorrow has gone over them?

4. Do not you sometimes infect others, and others infect you? There is no society in the world, in which every member of it does not sometimes lay a stumbling-block before the rest. The best carry about with them the tinder of a corrupt nature, which they cannot be rid of while they live, and

which is liable to be kindled at all times, and in all places- yes, they are apt to inflame others, and become the occasions of sinning. Certainly these things are apt to embitter this life to the saints.

II. Consider the MISERY and TROUBLES that attend it. Rest is desirable, but it is not to be found on this side of the grave. Worldly troubles attend all men in this life. This world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls upon another. They who fancy themselves beyond the reach of trouble, are mistaken- no state, no stage of life, is exempted from it. The crowned head is surrounded by thorny cares. Honor many times paves the way to deep disgrace. Riches, for the most part, are kept to the hurt of the owners. The fairest rose lacks not prickles; and the heaviest cross is sometimes wrapped up in the greatest earthly comfort.

Spiritual troubles attend the saints in this life. They are like travelers journeying in a cloudy night, in which the moon sometimes breaks out from under one cloud, but quickly hides her head again under another- no wonder they long to be at their journey's end. The sudden alterations which the best frame of spirit is liable to, the perplexing doubts, confounding fears, short-lived joys, and long-running sorrows, which have a certain affinity with the present life, must needs create in the saints a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.

III. Consider the great IMPERFECTIONS attending this life. While the soul is lodged in this cottage of clay, the necessities of the body are many- it is always craving. The mud walls must be repaired and patched up daily, until the clay cottage falls down for good and all. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are, in themselves, but base employments for a rational creature; and will be reputed such by the heaven-born soul. They are 'badges of imperfection', and, as such, unpleasant to the mind aspiring unto that life and immortality which is brought to light through the gospel; and would be very grievous, if this state of things were of long continuance. Does not the gracious soul often find itself yoked with the body, as with a companion in travel, unable to keep pace with it? When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. When the soul would mount upward, the body is a clog upon it, and a stone tied to the foot of a bird attempting to fly. The truth is, O believer, your soul in this body is, at best, but like a diamond in a ring, where much of it is obscured; it is far sunk in the vile clay, until relieved by death.

I conclude this subject with a few DIRECTIONS how to prepare for death, so that we may die comfortably. I speak not here of habitual preparation for death, which a true Christian, in virtue of his gracious state, never lacks, from the time he is born again, and united to Christ; but of actual preparation, or readiness in respect of his particular case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit; the lack of which makes even a saint very unfit to die.

First, Let it be your constant care to keep a clean conscience, "A conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man," Acts 24:16. Beware of a standing controversy between God and you, on the account of some iniquity regarded in the heart. When an honest man is about to leave his country, and not to return, he settles accounts with those he had dealings with, and lays down methods for paying his debts in due time, lest he be reckoned a bankrupt, and arrested by an officer when he is going off. Guilt lying on the conscience, is a fountain of fears, and will readily sting severely, when death stares the criminal in the face. Hence it is, that many, even of God's children, when dying, wish passionately, and desire eagerly, that they may live to do what they ought to have done before that time.

Therefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict, and exact in your course- beware of loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as you would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit, in a dying hour. And because, through the infirmity cleaving to us, in our present state of imperfection, in many things we offend all, renew your repentance daily, and be ever washing in the Redeemer's blood. As long as you are in the world, you will need to wash your feet, John 13:10, that is, to make application of the blood of Christ anew, for purging your consciences from the guilt of daily miscarriages. Let death find you at the 'fountain'; and, if so, it will find you ready to answer at its call.

Secondly, Be always watchful, waiting for your change, "like unto men that wait for their Lord- that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately," Luke 12:36. Beware of "slumbering and sleeping, while the bridegroom tarries." To be awakened out of spiritual slumber, by a surprising call to pass into another world, is a very frightful thing- but he who is daily waiting for the coming of his Lord, will comfortably receive the 'grim messenger', while he beholds him ushering in him, of whom he may confidently say, "This is my God, and I nave waited for him." The way to die comfortably, is, to die daily! Be often essaying, as it were, to die. Bring yourselves familiarly acquainted with death, by making many visits to the grave, in serious meditations upon it. This was Job's practice, Job 27:13-14, "I have made my bed in the darkness." Go and do likewise; and when death comes, you shall have nothing to do but to lie down. "I have said to corruption, You are my father- to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." You say so too; and you will be the fitter to go home to their house. Be frequently reflecting upon your conduct, and considering what course of life you wish to be found in, when death arrests you; and act accordingly. When you do the duties of your station in life, or are employed in acts of worship, think with yourselves, that, it may be, this is the last opportunity; and therefore do it as if you were never to do more of that kind. When you lie down at night, compose your spirits, as if you were not to awake until the heavens be no more. And when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last; and live accordingly. Surely that night comes, of which you will never see the morning; or that morning, of which you will never see the night. But which of your mornings or nights will be such, you know not.

Thirdly, Employ yourselves much in weaning your hearts from the world. The man who is making ready to go abroad, busies himself in taking leave of his friends. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose about you; that it may be easily dropped, when death comes to carry you away into another world. Moderate your affections towards your lawful comforts of life- let not your hearts be too much taken with them. The traveler acts unwisely, who allows himself to be so allured with the 'conveniences of the inn' where he lodges, as to make his necessary departure from it grievous. Feed with fear, and walk through the world as pilgrims and strangers. Just as, when the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily; so, when a Christian's heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one- we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us, Matthew 6:21.

Fourthly, Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven, for your support and comfort at the hour of death. The neglect thereof mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death. Therefore, examine yourselves frequently as to your spiritual state; that evidences which lie hid and unobserved, may be brought to light and

taken notice of. And if you would manage this work successfully, make solemn, serious work of it. Set apart some time for it. And, after earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby you are enabled to understand his own word, and to discern his own work in your souls; examine yourselves before the tribunal of your own consciences, that you may judge yourselves, in this weighty matter.

And, in the first place, let the marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord's Word- have recourse to some particular text for that purpose; such as Proverbs 8:17, "I love those who love me." Compare Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Psalms 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." Psalms 18:23, "I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from my iniquity." Compare Romans 7:22-23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man- but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit- for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Php 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship," or serve "God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The sum of the evidence arising from these texts, lies here- a real Christian is one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons, and all things; he has an weighty and impartial regard to God's commands; he opposes and wrestles against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him; he approves and loves the holy law, even in that very point wherein it strikes against his own beloved lust; his hope of heaven engages him to the study of universal holiness; in which he aims at perfection, though he cannot reach it in this life; he serves the Lord, not only in acts of worship, but in the whole of his conversation; and as to both, is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims, and ends of his service; yet he sees nothing in himself to trust to, before the Lord; Christ and his fullness are the stay of his soul; his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ, in point of justification or acceptance with God, and in point of sanctification too. Everyone, in whom these characters are found, has a title to heaven, according to the word. It is convenient and profitable to mark such texts, for this special use, as they occur, while you read the Scriptures, or hear sermons. The marks of a regenerate state thus fixed, in the next place impartially search and test your own hearts thereby, as in the sight of God, with dependence on him for spiritual discernment, that you may know whether they be in you or not. When you find them, form the conclusion deliberately and distinctly; namely, that therefore you are regenerated, and have a title to heaven. Thus you may gather evidences. But be sure to have recourse to God in Christ, by earnest prayer, for the testimony of the Spirit, whose office it is to "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Romans 8:16.

Moreover, carefully observe the course and method of providence towards you; and likewise, how your soul is affected under the same, in the various steps thereof- compare both with Scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and examples- so shall you perceive if the Lord deals with you as he always does unto those who love his name, and if you are going forth by the footsteps of the flock. This may afford you comfortable evidence. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, and the Lord will manifest himself to you, according to his promise, John 14:21, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But it is in vain to think of successful

self-examination, if you are loose and irregular in your walk.

Lastly, Dispatch the work of your day and generation with speed and diligence. David, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep" Acts 13:36. God has allotted us certain pieces of work of this kind, which ought to be dispatched before the time of working be over, Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might- for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going." Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith." If a passenger, after he has gotten on ship, and the ship is getting under sail, remembers that he has omitted to dispatch a piece of necessary business when be was ashore, it must needs be uneasy to him. Even so, reflection in a dying hour upon neglected seasons, and lost opportunities, cannot fail to disquiet a Christian. Therefore, whatever is incumbent upon you to do for God’s honor, and the good of others, either as the duty of your station, or by special opportunity put into your hand, perform it seasonably, if you would die comfortably.

01.04b The difference between the Righteous

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) The difference between the Righteous

and the Wicked in their death "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous has hope in his death." Proverbs 14:32. This text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians; having a dark side towards the latter, and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh’s jailor, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison; the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be led to execution. It shows the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death; who, as they act a very different part in life, so, in death, have a very different exit. As to the death of a WICKED man, here is,

1. The MANNER of his passing out of the world. He is "driven away;" namely, in his death, as is clear from the opposite clause. He is forcibly thrust out of his place in this world; driven away as chaff before the wind.

2. The STATE he passes away in. He dies also in a sinful and hopeless state.

A. In a sinful state- He is driven away in his wickedness. He lived in it, and he dies in it. His filthy garments of sin in which he wrapped up himself in his life are his prison garments, in which he shall lie wrapped up forever.

B. In a hopeless state- "but the righteous has hope in his death;" which plainly imports the hopelessness of the wicked in their death. Whereby is not meant, that no wicked man shall have any hope at all when he is dying, but shall die in despair. No- sometimes it is so indeed; but frequently it is otherwise; foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath. But the wicked man has no solid hope- as for the delusive hopes he entertains himself with, death will root them up, and he shall be forever irretrievably miserable. As to the death of a righteous man, he has hope in his death. This is ushered in with a "but," importing the removal of these dreadful circumstances, with which the wicked man is attended, who is driven away in his wickedness; but the godly are not so.

1. Not so, in the manner of their passing out of the world. The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind; but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried away by the angels into Abraham’s bosom, Luke 16:22.

2. Not so as to their state, when passing out of this life. The righteous man dies, not in a sinful, but in a holy state. He does not go away in his sin, but out of it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. Not in a hopeless, but a hopeful state. He has hope in his death; he has the grace of hope, and the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world- and though, the stream of his hope at death may run shallow, yet he has still so much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE 1. The WICKED dying, are driven away in their wickedness, and in a HOPELESS state. In speaking to this doctrine, I. I shall show how, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness" at death.

II. I shall prove the hopelessness of their state at death.

III. And then apply the whole.

I. How, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness." In discoursing of this matter, I shall briefly inquire, 1. What is meant by their being "driven away."

2. Why they shall be driven, and where.

3. In what respects they may be said to be driven away "in their wickedness." But before I proceed, let me remark, that you are mistaken if you think that no people are to be called wicked, but those who are avowedly vicious and profane; as if the devil could dwell in none but those whose name is Legion. In Scripture account, all who are not righteous, in the manner hereafter explained, are reckoned wicked. Therefore the the text divides the whole world into two sorts- "the righteous and the wicked," and you will see the same thing in Malachi 3:18, "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked." Therefore if you are not righteous, you are wicked. If you have not an imputed righteousness, and also an implanted righteousness, or united to Christ by faith, however moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, you are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness- if death finds you in that state. Now,

1. As to the MEANING of this phrase, "driven away," there are three things in it; the wicked shall be taken away suddenly, violently, and irresistibly.

(1.) Unrenewed men shall be taken away SUDDENLY at death. Not that all wicked men die suddenly; nor that they are all wicked that die so; God forbid. But,

1. Death commonly comes upon them unexpectedly, and so surprises them, as the deluge surprised the old world, though they were forewarned of it long before it came; and as travail comes on a woman with child, with surprising suddenness, although looked for and expected, 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Death seizes them, as a creditor does his debtor, to drag him to prison, Psalms 55:15, and that when they are not aware. Death comes in, as a thief, at the window, and finds them full of busy thoughts about this life which that very day perish.

2. Death always seizes them unprepared for it; the old house falls down about their ears, before they have another provided. When death casts them to the door, they have not where to lay their heads; unless it be on a bed of fire and brimstone. The soul and body are as it were hugging one another in mutual embraces; when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them.

3. Death hurries them away in a moment to destruction, and makes a most dismal change- the man for the most part never knows where he is, until "in hell he lift up his eyes," Luke 16:23. The floods of wrath suddenly overwhelm his soul; and before he is aware, he is plunged into the bottomless pit!

(2.) The unrenewed man is taken away out of the world VIOLENTLY. Driving is a violent action; he is "chased out of the world," Job 18:18. Gladly would he stay, if he could; but death drags him

away, like a malefactor to the execution. He sought no other portion than the profits and pleasures of this world- he has no other; he really desires no other- how can he then go away out of it, if he were not driven?

Question. "But may not a wicked man be willing to die?" Answer. He may indeed be willing to die; but observe it is only in one of three cases.

1. In a fit of passion, by reason of some trouble that he is impatient to be rid of. Thus, many people, when their passion has got the better of their reason, and when, on that account they are most unfit to die, will be ready to cry, "O to be gone!" But should their desire be granted, and death came at their call, they would quickly show they were not in earnest; and that, if they go, they must be driven away against their wills.

2. When they are brim-full of despair may they be willing to die. Thus Saul murdered himself; and Spira wished to be in hell, that he might know the uttermost of what he believed he was to suffer. In this manner men may seek after death, while it flees from them. But fearful is the violence these undergo, whom the terrors of God do thus drive.

3. When they are dreaming of happiness after death. Foolish virgins, under the power of delusion, as to their state, may be willing to die, having no fear of lying down in sorrow. How many are there, who can give no scriptural ground for their hope, who yet have no bands in their death! Many are driven to darkness 'sleeping'- they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to; though the chariot in which they are, drives furiously to the depths of hell, yet they fear not, because they are fast asleep!

(3.) The unregenerate man is taken away IRRESISTIBLY. He must go, though sore against his will. Death will lake no refusal, nor admit of any delay; though the man has not lived half his days, according to his own computation. If he will not bow, it will break him. If he will not come forth, it will pull the house down about his ears; for there he must not stay. Although the physicians help, friends groan, the wife and children cry, and he himself use his utmost efforts to retain the spirit, his soul is required of him; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see light.

2. Let us consider, WHY they are driven, and WHERE. When the wicked die,

(1.) They are driven out of this world, where they sinned, into the other world, where they must be judged, and receive their particular sentences, Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." They shall no more return to their beloved earth. Though their hearts are wedded to their earthly enjoyments, they must leave them, they can carry nothing hence. How sorrowful must their departure be, when they have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them!

(2.) They are driven out of the society of the saints on earth, into the society of the damned in hell, Luke 16:22-23, "The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes." What a multitude of the devil's goats do now take place among Christ's sheep! but at death they shall be "led forth with the workers of iniquity," Psalms 125:5. There is a mixed multitude in this world, but no mixture in the other; each party is there set by themselves. Though hypocrites grow here as tares among the wheat, death will root them up, and they shall be bound in bundles for the fire.

(3.) They are driven out of time into eternity! While time lasts with them, there is hope; but when time goes, all hope goes with it. Precious time is now lavishly spent- it lies so heavy on the hands of many, that they think themselves obliged to take several ways to drive away time. But beware of being at a loss what to do in life- improve time for eternity, while you have it; for before long, death will drive it from you, and you from it, so as you shall never meet again.

(4.) They are driven out of their specious 'pretenses to piety'. Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word "hypocrite" properly signifies a stage-player, who appears to be what indeed he is not. This world is the stage on which these children of the devil impersonate the children of God. Their 'show of religion' is the player's coat, under which one must look, who will judge of them aright. Death turns them out of their coat, and they appear in their native dress- it unveils them, and takes off their mask! There are none in the other world, who pretend to be better than they really are. Depraved nature acts in the regions of horror, undisguised!

(5.) They are driven away from all means of grace; and are set beyond the line, quite out of all prospect of mercy. There is no more an opportunity to buy oil for the lamp; it is gone out at death, and can never be lighted again. There may be offers of mercy and peace made, after they are gone; but they are to others, not to them- there are no such offers in the place to which they are driven; these offers are only made in that place from which they are driven away.

3. In what respects may they be said to be driven away in their wickedness?

Answer 1. In respect of their being driven away in their sinful unconverted state. Having lived enemies to God, they die in a state of enmity to him- for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace in this life. The child that is dead in the womb, is born dead, and is cast out of the womb into the grave- so, "he who is dead while he lives", or is spiritually dead, is cast forth of the womb of time, in the same state of death, into the pit of utter misery. O miserable death, to die in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity! It had been incomparably better for such as die thus, that they had never been born!

Answer 2. In regard that they die sinning, acting wickedly against God, in contradiction to the divine law; for they can do nothing but sin while they live- so death takes them in the very act of sinning; violently draws them from the embraces of their lusts, and drives them away to the tribunal, to receive their sentence! It is a remarkable expression, Job 36:14, "They die in youth," the marginal reading is, "their soul dies in youth"- their lusts being lively, their desires vigorous, and expectations big, as is common in youth. "And their life is among the unclean;" or, "And the company" or herd "of them" dies "among the Sodomites," namely, is taken awny in the act of their sin and wickedness, as the men of Sodom were, Genesis 19:1-38; Luke 17:28-29.

Answer 3. As they are driven away, loaded with the guilt of all their sins; this is the winding-sheet that shall lie down with them in the dust, Job 20:11. Their works follow them into the other world; they go away with the yoke of their transgressions wreathed about their necks. Guilt is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences- but when death opens the way for sparks of divine vengeance, like fire, to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be, as it

were, wrapped up forever!

Answer 4. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, in so far as they die under the absolute power of their wickedness. While there is hope, there is some restraint on the worst of men; those moral endowments, which God gives to a number of men, for the benefit of mankind in this life, are so many restraints upon the impetuous wickedness of human nature. But all hope being cut off, and these gifts withdrawn, the wickedness of the wicked will then arrive at its perfection. As the seeds of grace, sown in the hearts of the elect, come to their full maturity at death; so wicked and hellish dispositions in the reprobate, come then to their highest pitch! Their prayers to God will then be turned to horrible curses, and their praises to hideous blasphemies, Matthew 25:13, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This gives a dismal, but correct view of the state of the wicked in another world.

II. I shall discover the HOPELESSNESS of the state of unrenenewed men at death. It appears to be very hopeless, if we consider these four things.

1. Death cuts off their hopes and prospects of peace and pleasure in this life. Luke 12:19-20, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you- then who shall have those things which you have provided?" They look for great matters in this world, they hope to increase their wealth, to see their families prosper, and to live at ease; but death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him," Job 20:23. He may begin a web of contrivances for advancing his worldly interest; but before he gets it wrought out, death comes and cuts it off. "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalms 146:4.

2. When death comes, they have no solid ground to hope for eternal happiness. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?" Job 27:8. Whatever hopes they fondly entertain, they are not founded on God’s word, which is the only sure ground of hope; if they knew their own case, they would see themselves only happy in a ’dream’. And indeed what hope can they have? The law is plain against them, and condemns them. The curses of it, those cords of death, are about them already. The Savior whom they slighted, is now their Judge; and their Judge is their enemy! How then can they hope? They have bolted the door of mercy against themselves, by their unbelief. They have despised the remedy, and therefore must die without mercy. They have no saving interest in Jesus Christ, the only channel of conveyance through which mercy flows- and therefore they can never taste it. The ’sword of justice’ guards the door of mercy, so as none can enter in, but the members of the mystical body of Christ, over whose head is a covert of atoning blood, the Mediator’s blood. These indeed may pass without a harm, for justice has nothing to require of them. But others cannot pass, since they are not in Christ- death comes to them with the sting in it- the sting of unpardoned guilt. It is armed against them with all the force which the sanction of a holy law can give it. 1 Corinthians 15:56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When that law was given on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly," Exodus 19:18. When the Redeemer was making satisfaction for the elect’s breaking it, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," Matthew 27:51.

What possible ground of hope, then, is there to the wicked man, when death comes upon him armed with the force of this law? How can he escape that fire, which "burnt unto the midst of heaven?" Deuteronomy 4:11. How shall he be able to stand in that smoke, that "ascended up as the smoke of a furnace?" Exodus 19:18. How will he endure the terrible "thunders and lightnings," Exodus 19:16, and dwell in "the darkness, clouds, and thick darkness?" Deuteronomy 4:11. All these comparisons heaped together do but faintly represent the fearful tempest of wrath and indignation, which shall pursue the wicked to the lowest hell; and forever abide on those who are driven to darkness at death.

3. Death roots up their delusive hopes of eternal happiness; then it is that their covenant with death and agreement with hell, is broken. They are awakened out of their golden dreams, and at length lift up their eyes; Job 8:14, "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." They trust that all shall be well with them after death- but their trust is as a web woven out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art and industry. They wrap themselves up in their hope, as the spider wraps herself in her web. But it is a weak and slender defense; for however it may withstand the threatenings of the word of God; death, that broom of destruction, will sweep them and it both away, so as there shall not be the least shred of it left; and he, who this moment will not let his hope go, shall next moment be utterly hopeless. Death overturns the house built on the sand; it leaves no man under the power of delusion.

4. Death makes their state absolutely and forever hopeless. Matters cannot be retrieved and amended after death. For,

1. Time once gone can never be recalled. If cries or tears, price or pains, could bring time back again, the wicked man might have hope in his death. But tears of blood will not prevail! Nor will his roaring for millions of ages cause it to return! The sun will not stand still for the sluggard to awake and enter on his journey; and when once it is gone down, he needs not expect the night to be turned into day for his sake- he must lodge through the long night of eternity, where his time left him.

2. There is no returning to this life, to amend what is amiss; it is a state of probation and trial, which terminates at death; therefore we cannot return to it again; it is but once we thus live, and once we die. Death carries the wicked man to "his own place," Acts 1:25. This life is our working day. Death closes our day and our work together. We may readily admit the wicked might have some hope in their death, if, after death has opened their eyes, they could return to life, and have but the trial of one Sabbath, one offer of Christ, one day, or but one hour more, to make up their peace with God- but "man lies down, and rises not until the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," Job 14:12.

3. In the other world, men have no access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved, though they be ever so desirous of it. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go," Ecclesiastes 9:10. Now a man may flee from the wrath to come; he may get into a refuge. But when once death has done its work, "the door is shut!" there are no more offers of mercy, no more pardons- where the tree is fallen, there it must lie.

Let what has been said be carefully pondered; and that it may be of use, let me exhort you,

First, To take heed that you entertain no hopes of heaven, but what are built on a solid foundation- tremble to think what fair hopes of happiness death sweeps away, like cobwebs; how the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be at the very threshold of heaven; how, in the moment they expected to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, into the regions of bliss and peace; they are carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror!

I beseech you to BEWARE-

1. Of a hope built upon ground that was never cleared. The wise builder dug deep, Luke 6:48. Were your hopes of heaven never shaken; but have you had good hopes all your days? Alas for it! you may see the mystery of your case explained, Luke 11:21, When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are at peace. But if they have been shaken, take heed lest some breaches only have been made in the old building, which you have got repaired again, by ways and means of your own. I assure you, that your hope, however fair a building it is, is not fit to trust to, unless your old hopes have been razed, and you have built on a foundation quite new.

2. Beware of that hope which looks bright in the dark, but loses all its luster when it is set in the light of God's word, when it is examined and tried by the touchstone of divine revelation, John 3:20-21, "for every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does the truth, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." That hope, which cannot abide scripture trial, but sinks when searched into by sacred truth, is a delusion, and not a true hope- for God's word is always a friend to the graces of God's Spirit, and an enemy to delusion.

3. Beware of that hope, which stands without being supported by scriptural evidences. Alas! many are big with hopes, who cannot give, because they really have not, any scripture grounds for them. You hope that all will be well with you after death- but what word of God is it, on which you have been caused to hope? Psalms 119:49. What scriptural evidence have you to prove that yours is not the hope of the hypocrite? What have you, after impartial self-examination, as in the sight of God, found in yourself, which the word of God determines to be a sure evidence of his right to eternal life, who is possessed of it? Numbers are ruined with such hopes as stand unsupported by scriptural evidence. Men are fond and tenacious of these hopes; but death will throw them down, and leave the self-deceiver hopeless.

4. Beware of that hope of heaven, which does not prepare and dispose you for heaven, which never makes your soul more holy, 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the most part of men, is rather a hope to be free from pain and torment in another life; than a hope of true happiness, the nature whereof is not understood and discerned. Therefore it rests in sloth and indolence, and does not excite to mortification and a heavenly life. So far are they from hoping aright for heaven, that they must own, if they speak their genuine sentiments, removing out of this world into any other place whatever, is rather their fear than their hope. The glory of the heavenly city does not at all draw their hearts upwards to it, nor do they lift up their heads with joy, in the prospect of arriving at it. If they had the true hope of the marriage day, they would, as the bride, the "Lamb's wife," be "making themselves ready for it," Revelation 19:7. But their hopes are produced by their sloth, and their sloth is nourished by their hopes. Oh, Sirs, as you would not be driven away helpless in your

death, beware of these hopes! Raze them now, and build on a new foundation, lest death leave not one stone of them upon another, and you never be able to hope any more.

Secondly, Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life, if you would not at death be driven away in your wickedness! Remember the fatal end of the wicked as the text represents it. I know there is a great difference in the death of the wicked, as to some circumstances- but ALL of them, in their death, agree in this, that they are driven away in their wickedness. Some of them die resolutely, as if they scorned to be afraid; some in raging despair, so filled with horror that they cry out as if they were already in hell; others in sullen despondency, oppressed with fears, so that their hearts sink within them, at the remembrance of misspent time, and the view which they have of eternity, having neither head nor heart to do anything for their own relief. And others die stupidly; they live like beasts, and they die like beasts, without any concern on their spirits, about their eternal state. They groan under their bodily distress but have no sense of the danger of their soul! One may, with almost as much prospect of success, speak to a stone, as speak to them; vain is the attempt to teach them; nothing that can be said moves them. To discourse to them, either of the joys of heaven on the torments of hell, is to plough on a rock, or beat the air. Some die like the foolish virgins, dreaming of heaven; their foreheads are steeled against the fears of hell, with presumptuous hopes of heaven. The business of those who would be useful to them, is not to answer doubts about the case of their souls, but to discover to them their own false hopes. But which way soever the unconverted man dies, he is "driven away in his wickedness."

O dreadful case! Oh, let the consideration of so horrid a departure out of this world, move you to flee to Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient Savior, an almighty Redeemer. Let it prevail to drive you out of your wickedness, to holiness of heart and life. Though you reckon it pleasant to live in wickedness, yet you cannot but own, it is bitter to die in it. And if you leave it not in time, you must go on in your wickedness to hell, the proper place of it, that it may be set there on its own base. For when you are passing out of this world, all your sins, from the first to the last of them, will swarm about you, hang upon you, accompany you to the other world, and, as so many furies, surround you there forever.

Thirdly, O be concerned for others, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. What would you not do to prevent any of your friends dying an untimely and violent death? But, alas! do you not see them in hazard of being driven away in their wickedness! Is not death approaching them, even the youngest of them? And are they not strangers to true Christianity, remaining in that state which they came into the world? Oh! make haste to pluck the brand out of the fire, lest it be burned to ashes! The death of relations often leaves a sting in the hearts of those they leave behind them, because they did not do for their souls as they had opportunity; and because the opportunity is forever taken out of their hands. The state of the GODLY in death is a HOPEFUL state

We have seen the dark side of the cloud looking towards ungodly men, passing out of the world; let us now take a view of the bright side of it, shining on the godly, as they enter on their eternal state. In discoursing on this subject, I shall confirm this doctrine, answer an objection against it, and then make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. For CONFIRMATION, let it be observed, that although the passage out of this world by death has a frightful aspect to poor mortals, and to miscarry in it must needs be of fatal consequence; yet the following circumstances make the state of the godly in their death, happy and hopeful.

1. They hare a trusty good Friend before them in the other world. Jesus Christ, their best Friend, is Lord of the land to which death carries them. When Joseph sent for his father to come down to him to Egypt, telling him, "God had made him lord over all Egypt," Genesis 45:9, "And Jacob "saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived," Genesis 45:27. He resolves to undertake the journey.

I think, when the Lord calls a godly man out of the world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, he has faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the 'wagon of death' which comes to carry him there. It is true, indeed, he has a weighty trial to undergo- after death the judgment. But the case of the godly is altogether hopeful; for the Lord of the land is their husband, and their husband is the judge. "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22. Surely the case of the wife is hopeful, when her own husband is her judge, even such a husband as hates divorce. No husband is so loving and so tender of his spouse, as the Lord Christ is of his. One would think it would be a very bad land, which a wife would not willingly go to, where her husband is the ruler and judge.

Moreover, their judge is the advocate, 1 John 2:1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Therefore they need not fear their being put back, and falling into condemnation. What can be more favorable? Can they think, that he who pleads their cause, will himself pass sentence against them?

Yet further, their advocate is their Redeemer; they are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Peter 1:18-19. So when he pleads for them, he is pleading his own cause. Though an advocate may be careless of the interest of one who employs him, yet surely he will do his utmost to defend his own right, which he has purchased with his money- and shall not their advocate defend the purchase of his own blood? But more than all that, their Redeemer is their head, and they are his members, Ephesians 5:23; Ephesians 5:30. Though one were so silly as to let his own purchase go, without standing up to defend his right, yet surely he will not part with a limb of his own body. Is not their case then hopeful in death, who are so closely linked and allied to the Lord of the other world, who are "the keys of hell and of death?"

2. They shall have a safe passage to another world. They must indeed go through "the valley of the shadow of death;" but though it be in itself a 'dark and shady valley', it shall be a 'valley of hope' to them- they shall not be driven through it, but be as men in perfect safety, who fear no evil, Psalms 23:4.

Why should they thus fear? They have the Lord of the land's safe conduct, his pass sealed with his own blood; namely, the blessed covenant, which is the saint's death-bed comfort, 2 Samuel 23:5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure- for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Who then can harm them? It is safe riding in Christ's chariot, Song of Solomon 3:9, both through life and death. They have good and honorable attendants- a guard, even a guard of angels. These encamp about them in the time of their life; and surely will not leave them in the day

of their death. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on their Lord’s bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house. When friends in mournful mood stand by the saint’s bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for by angels, to be carried into Abraham’s bosom, Luke 16:22. The captain of the saint’s salvation is the captain of this holy guard- he was their guide even unto death, and he will be their guide through it too, Psalms 23:4, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me." They may, without fear, pass that ’river’, being confident it shall not overflow them; and they may walk through that ’fire’, being sure they shall not be burnt by it.

Death can do them no harm! It cannot even hurt their bodies- for though it separate the soul from the body, it cannot separate the body from the Lord Jesus Christ. Even death is to them but ’sleep in Jesus’, 1 Thessalonians 4:14. They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust; laid up in the grave as in their Lord’s cabinet. They lie in a grave ’mellowing’, as precious fruit laid up to be brought forth to him at the resurrection. The husbandman has corn in his barn, and corn lying in the ground- the latter is more precious to him than the former, because he looks to get it returned with increase. Even so the dead bodies of the saints are valued by their Savior- they are "sown in corruption," to be "raised in incorruption"; "sown in dishonor," to be "raised in glory," 1 Corinthians 15:42-43. It cannot hurt their souls. It is with the souls of the saints at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage, whereof we have the history, Acts 27:1-44. The ship was broken to pieces, but the passengers got all safe to land. When the dying saint’s speech is stopped, his eyes set, and his last breath drawn, the soul gets safe away into the heavenly paradise, leaving the body to return to its earth, but in the joyful hope of a reunion at its glorious resurrection. But how can death hurt the godly? It is a foiled enemy- if it casts them down, it is only that they may rise more glorious. "Our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death," 2 Timothy 1:10. The soul and life of it is gone- it is but a ’walking shadow’ that may fright, but cannot hurt saints- it is only the ’shadow of death’ to them- it is not the thing itself; their dying is ’but as dying’, or ’somewhat like dying’. The apostle tells us, "It is Christ that died," Romans 8:34. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, though stoned to death, yet only ’fell asleep’, Acts 7:60. Certainly the nature of death is quite changed, with respect to the saints. It is not to them, what it was to Jesus Christ their head- it is not the venomed ruining thing, wrapped up in the sanction of the first covenant, Genesis 2:17, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." It comes to the godly without a sting- they may meet it with that salutation, "O death, where is your sting?" Is this Mara? Is this ’bitter’ death? It went out full into the world, when the first Adam opened the door to it, but the second Adam has brought it again empty to his own people.

I feel a sting, may the dying saint say- yet it is but a bee sting, slinging only through the skin- but, O death, where is your sting, your old sting, the serpent’s sting, that stings to the heart and soul? The sting of death is sin- but that is taken away. If death arrests the saint, and carries him before the Judge, to answer for the debt he contracted, the debt will be found paid by the glorious Surety; and he has the discharge to show. The thorn of guilt is pulled out of the man’s conscience; and his name is blotted out of the black roll, and written among the living in Jerusalem.

It is true, it is a great journey through the valley of the shadow of death- but the saint’s burden is taken away from his back, his iniquity is pardoned, he may walk at ease- "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast," the redeemed may walk at leisure there, free from all apprehensions of danger.

3. They shall have a joyful entrance into the other world. Their arrival in the regions of bliss, will be celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer. A dying day is a good day to a godly man. Yes, it is his best day; it is better to him than his birth-day, or than the most joyous day which he ever had on earth. "A good name," says the wise man, is "better than precious ointment- and the day of death, than the day of one's birth," Ecclesiastes 7:1. The notion of the immortality of the soul, and of future happiness, which obtained among some pagan nations, had wonderful effects on them. Some of them, when they mourned for the dead, did it in women's apparel; that, being moved with the indecency of the garb, they might the sooner lay aside their mourning. Others buried them without any lamentation or mourning; but had a sacrifice, and a feast for friends, upon that occasion. Some were used to mourn at births, and rejoice at burials. But the practice of some Indian nations is yet more strange, where, upon the husband's decease, his wife, or wives, with a cheerful countenance, enter the flames prepared for the husband's corpse. But however false notions of a future state, assisted by pride, affectation of applause, apprehensions of difficulties in this life, and such like principles proper to depraved human nature, may influence crude uncultivated minds, when strengthened by the arts of hell; O what solid joy and consolation may they have, who are true Christians, being in Christ, who "has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!" 2 Timothy 1:10. Death is one of those "all things," that "work together for good to those who love God," Romans 8:28. When the body dies, the soul is perfected- the 'body of death' goes off at the 'death of the body'.

What harm did the jailer to Pharaoh's butler, when he opened the prison door to him, and let him out? Is the bird in worse case, when at liberty, than when confined in a cage? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of the saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man, as Haman came to Mordecai, with the royal apparel and the horse, Esther 6:11, with commission to do them honor, however awkwardly it be performed. I question not but Haman performed the ceremony with a very ill mien, a pale face, a downcast look, and a cloudy countenance, and like one who came to hang him, rather than to honor him. But he whom the king delighted to honor, must be honored; and Haman, Mordecai's grand enemy, must be the man employed to put this honor upon him. Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer, our Savior, our Mediator, by whose death, 'grim devouring death' is made to do such a good office to those whom it might otherwise have hurried away in their wickedness, to utter and eternal destruction! A dying day is, in itself, a joyful day to the godly; it is their redemption day, when the captives are delivered, when the prisoners are set free. It is the day of the pilgrims coming home from their pilgrimage; the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels, to their own country, and their Father's house; and enter into actual possession of the glorious inheritance. It is their marriage day- now is the time of espousals; but then the marriage is consummated, and a marriage feast begun, which has no end. If so, is not the state of the godly in death, a hopeful state?

II. Objection- "But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope?"

Answer- It must be owned, that saints do not all die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them, as well as among the wicked; yet the worst case of a dying saint is indeed a hopeful one. Some die triumphantly, in a fnli assurance of faith. 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." They get a taste of the joys of

heaven, while here on earth; and begin the songs of Zion, while yet in a strange land.

Others die in a solid dependence of faith on their Lord and Savior- though they cannot sing triumphantly, yet they can, and will say confidently, "The Lord is their God." Though they cannot triumph over death, with old Simeon, having Christ in his arms, and saying, "Lord now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word- for my eyes have seen your salvation," Luke 2:29-30; yet they can say with dying Jacob, "I have waited for your salvation, Lord," Genesis 49:18. His left hand is under their head, to support them, though his right hand does not embrace them- they firmly believe, though they are not filled with joy in believing. They can plead the covenant, and hang by the promise, although their house is not so with God as they could wish. But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned in Zechariah 14:7, "Not day, nor night." They may die under great doubts and fears; setting as it were in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist. They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their spirit of heaviness, until death strips them of it. They may be carried to heaven through the confines of hell; and may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new Jerusalem; and may be compared to a ship almost wrecked in sight of the harbor, which yet gets safe into her port, 1 Corinthians 3:15, "If any man’s work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss- but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." There is safety amid their fears, but danger in the wicked’s strongest confidence; and there is a blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows- "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," Psalms 97:11.

Now, saints are liable to such perplexity in their death, because, though they are Christians indeed, yet they are men of like passions with others; and death is a frightful object in itself, whatever dress it appears in- the stern countenance with which it looks at mortals, can hardly fail of causing them to shrink. Moreover, the saints are of all men the most jealous of themselves. They think of eternity, and of a tribunal, more deeply than others do; with them it is a more serious thing to die, than the rest of mankind are aware of. They know the deceits of the heart, the subtleties of depraved human nature, better than others do. Therefore they may have much to do to keep up hope on a death-bed; while others pass off quietly, like sheep to the slaughter; and the rather, that Satan, who uses all his art to support the hopes of the hypocrite, will do his utmost to mar the peace, and increase the fears, of the saint. And finally, the bad frame of spirit, and ill condition, in which death sometimes seizes a true Christian, may cause this perplexity. By his being in the state of grace, he is indeed always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is ensured- but yet there is more necessary to his actual preparation and dying comfortably, his spirit must be in good condition too.

Therefore there are three cases, in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God-

1. If it seizes him at a time when the guilt of some particular sin, unrepented of, is lying on his conscience- and death comes on that very account, to take him out of the land of the living; as was the case of many of the Corinthian believers, 1 Corinthians 11:30, "For this cause," namely, of unworthy communicating, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." If a person is surprised with the approach of death, while lying under the guilt of some unpardoned sin, it cannot but cause a mighty consternation.

2. When death catches him napping. The midnight cry must be frightful to sleeping virgins. The man who lies in a ruinous house, and awakes not until the timbers begin to crack, and the stones to drop down about his ears, may indeed get out of it safely, but not without fears of being crushed by its fall. When a Christian has been going on in a course of security and backsliding, and awakens not until death comes to his bedside, it is no wonder that he gets a fearful awakening.

3. When he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet death without some evidences of a title to eternal life at hand; hard to go through the dark valley without the candle of the Lord shining upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall land, whether in heaven or hell.

Nevertheless the state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful. The presumptuous hopes of the ungodly, in their death, cannot make their state hopeful; neither can the fears of a saint make his state hopeless- for God judges according to the truth of the thing, not according to men’s opinions about it. Therefore the saints can be no more altogether without hope, than they can be altogether without faith. Their faith may be very weak, but it fails not; and their hope very low, yet they will, and do hope to the end. Even while the godly seem to be carried away with the stream of doubts and fears, there remains still as much hope as determines them to lay hold on the tree of life that grows on the banks of the river. Jonah 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of your sight- yet I will look again toward your temple."

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This speaks comfort to the godly against the fear of death. A godly man may be called a happy man before his death, because, whatever befalls him in life, he shall certainly be happy at death. You who are in Christ, who are true Christians, have hope in your end; and such a hope as may comfort you against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour. This I shall branch out, in answering some cases briefly-

Case 1- "The prospect of death," will some of the saints say, "is uneasy to me, not knowing what shall become of my family when I am gone."

Answer. The righteous has hope in his death, as to his family, as well as himself. Although you have little, for the present, to live upon; which has been the condition of many of God’s chosen ones, 1 Corinthians 4:11, "We," namely, the apostles, "both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;" and though you have nothing to leave them, as was the case of that son of the prophets, who feared the Lord, and yet died in debt which he was unable to pay, as his poor widow represents, 2 Kings 4:2; yet you have a good Friend to leave them to; a covenant God, to whom you may confidently commit them. "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in me." Jeremiah 49:11. The world can bear witness of signal settlements made upon the children of providence; such as by their pious parents have been cast upon God’s providential care. It has been often remarked, that they lacked neither provision nor education. Moses is an eminent instance of this. He, though he was an outcast infant, Exodus 2:3, yet became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Acts 7:22, and became king in Jeshurun, Deuteronomy 33:5. O! may we not be ashamed, that we do not confidently trust him with the concerns of our families, to whom, as our Savior and Redeemer, we

have committed our eternal interests?

Case 2- "Death will take us away from our dear friends; yes, we shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, in the blessed ordinances."

Answer- It will take you to your best Friend, the Lord Christ. The friends you leave behind you, if they be indeed people of worth, you will meet again, when they come to heaven, and you will never be separated any more. If death takes you away from the temple below, it will carry you to the temple above. It will indeed take you from the streams, but it will set you down by the fountain. If it puts out your candle, it will carry you where there is no night, where there is an eternal day.

Case 3- "I have so much to do, in time of health, to satisfy myself as to my interest in Christ, about my being a real Christian, a regenerate man, that I judge it is almost impossible I should die comfortably."

Answer- If it is thus with you, then double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Endeavor to grow in knowledge, and walk closely with God- be diligent in self-examination; and pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whereby you may know the things freely given you of God. If you are enabled, by the power and Spirit of Christ, thus diligently to prosecute your spiritual concerns, though the time of your life be neither day nor night, yet at evening time it may be light.

Many weak Christians indulge doubts and fears about their spiritual state, as if they placed at least some part of religion in their imprudent practice; but towards the end of life, they think and act in another manner. The traveler, who reckons that he has time to spare, may stand still debating with himself, whether this or the other be the right way- but when the sun begins to set, he is forced to lay aside his scruples, and resolutely to go forward in the road which he judges to be the right one, lest he lie all night in the open fields. Thus some Christians, who perplex themselves much, throughout the course of their lives, with jealous doubts and fears, content themselves when they come to die, with such evidences of the safety of their state, as they could not be satisfied with before; and by disputing less against themselves, and believing more, court the peace they formerly rejected, and gain it too.

Case 4- "I am under a sad decay, in respect of my spiritual condition."

Answer- Bodily consumptions may make death easy- but it is not so in spiritual decays. I will not say, that a godly man cannot be easy in such a case, when he dies, but I believe it is rarely so. Ordinarily, I suppose a cry comes to awaken sleeping virgins, before death comes. Samson is set to grind in the prison, until his locks grow again. David and Solomon fell under great spiritual decays; but before they died, they recovered their spiritual strength and vigor. However, bestir yourselves without delay, to strengthen the things that remain- your fright will be the less, for being awakened from spiritual sleep before death comes to your bedside- and you ought to lose no time, seeing you know not how soon death may seize you.

Case 5- "It is terrible to think of the other world, that world of spirits, which I have so little acquaintance with."

Answer- Your best friend is Lord of that other world. Abraham’s bosom is kindly even to those who never saw his face. After death, your soul becomes capable of converse with the blessed inhabitants of that other world. The spirits of just men made perfect, were once such as your spirit

now is. And as for the angels, however superior their nature in the rank of beings, yet our nature is dignified above theirs, in the man Christ, and they are all of them your Lord's servants, and so your fellow-servants.

Case 6- "The pangs of death are terrible."

Answer- Yet not so terrible as pangs of conscience, caused by a piercing sense of guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath, with which I suppose them to be not altogether unacquainted. But who would not endure bodily sickness, that the soul may become sound, and every whit whole? Each pang of death will set sin a step nearer the door; and with the last breath, the body of sin will breathe out its last. The pains of death will not last long; and the Lord your God will not leave, but support you under them.

Case 7- "But I am likely to be cut off in the midst of my days."

Answer- Do not complain, you will be the sooner at home- you thereby have the advantage of your fellow-laborers, who were at work before you in the vineyard. God, in the course of his providence, hides some of his saints early in the grave, that they may be taken away from the evil to come. An early removal out of this world, prevents much sin and misery. They have no ground of complaint, who get the residue of their years in Immanuel's land. Surely you shall live as long as you have work cut out for you by the great Master, to be done for him in this world- and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.

Case 8- "I am afraid of sudden death."

Answer- You may indeed die so. Good Eli died suddenly, 1 Samuel 4:18. Yet death found him watching, 1 Samuel 4:13. "Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour the Lord does come," Matthew 24:42. But be not afraid, it is an inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch you out of Christ; and therefore can never seize you, as a jailor, to hurry you into the prison of hell. Sudden death may hasten and facilitate your passage to heaven, but can do you no prejudice.

Case 9- "I am afraid it will be my lot to die lacking the exercise of reason."

Answer- I make no question but a child of God, a true Christian, may die in this case. But what harm? There is no hazard in it, as to his eternal state- a disease at death may divest him of his reason, but not of his religion. When a man, going on a long voyage, has put his affairs in order, and put all his goods aboard, he himself may he carried on board the ship sleeping- all is safe with him, although he knows not where he is, until he awake in the ship. Even so the godly man, who dies in this case, may die uncomfortably, but not unsafely.

Case 10- "I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death are terrible to me."

Answer- The less you think on death, the thoughts of it will be the more frightful- make it familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby quiet your fears. Look at the white and bright side of the cloud- take faith's view of the city that has foundations; so shall you see hope in your death. Be duly affected with the body of sin and death, the frequent interruptions of your communion with God, and with the glory which dwells on the other side of death- this will contribute much to remove slavish fear.

It is a pity that saints should be so fond of life as they often are- they ought to be always on good terms with death. When matters are duly considered, it might be well expected that every child of God, every regenerate man, should generously profess concerning this life, what Job did, Job 7:16, "I loath it, I would not live always." In order to gain their hearts to this desirable temper, I offer the following additional considerations.

I. Consider the SINFULNESS that attends life in this world. While you live here, you sin, and see others sinning. You breathe infectious air. You live in pest-house. Is it at all strange to loathe such a life?

1. Your own plague sores are running on you. Does not the sin of your nature make you groan daily? Are you not sensible, that though the cure is begun, it is far from being perfected? Has not the leprosy got into the walls of the house, which cannot be removed without pulling it down? Is not your nature so vitiated, that no less than the separation of the soul from the body can root out the disease? Have you not your sores without, as well as your sickness within? Do you not leave marks of your pollution on whatever passes through your hands? Are not all your actions tainted and blemished with defects and imperfections? Who, then, should be much in love with life, but such whose sickness is their health, and who glory in their shame?

2. The loathsome sores of others are always before your eyes, go where you will. The follies and wickedness of men are everywhere conspicuous, and make but an unpleasant scene. This sinful world is but an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous.

3. Are not your own sores often breaking out again after healing? Frequent relapses may well cause us remit of our fondness for this life. To be ever struggling, and anon falling into the mire again, makes weary work. Do you never wish for cold death, thereby effectually to cool the heat of these lusts, which so often take fire again, even after a flood of godly sorrow has gone over them?

4. Do not you sometimes infect others, and others infect you? There is no society in the world, in which every member of it does not sometimes lay a stumbling-block before the rest. The best carry about with them the tinder of a corrupt nature, which they cannot be rid of while they live, and which is liable to be kindled at all times, and in all places- yes, they are apt to inflame others, and become the occasions of sinning. Certainly these things are apt to embitter this life to the saints.

II. Consider the MISERY and TROUBLES that attend it. Rest is desirable, but it is not to be found on this side of the grave. Worldly troubles attend all men in this life. This world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls upon another. They who fancy themselves beyond the reach of trouble, are mistaken- no state, no stage of life, is exempted from it. The crowned head is surrounded by thorny cares. Honor many times paves the way to deep disgrace. Riches, for the most part, are kept to the hurt of the owners. The fairest rose lacks not prickles; and the heaviest cross is sometimes wrapped up in the greatest earthly comfort.

Spiritual troubles attend the saints in this life. They are like travelers journeying in a cloudy night, in which the moon sometimes breaks out from under one cloud, but quickly hides her head again under another- no wonder they long to be at their journey’s end. The sudden alterations which the best frame of spirit is liable to, the perplexing doubts, confounding fears, short-lived joys, and long-running sorrows, which have a certain affinity with the present life, must needs create in the

saints a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.

III. Consider the great IMPERFECTIONS attending this life. While the soul is lodged in this cottage of clay, the necessities of the body are many- it is always craving. The mud walls must be repaired and patched up daily, until the clay cottage falls down for good and all. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are, in themselves, but base employments for a rational creature; and will be reputed such by the heaven-born soul. They are 'badges of imperfection', and, as such, unpleasant to the mind aspiring unto that life and immortality which is brought to light through the gospel; and would be very grievous, if this state of things were of long continuance. Does not the gracious soul often find itself yoked with the body, as with a companion in travel, unable to keep pace with it? When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. When the soul would mount upward, the body is a clog upon it, and a stone tied to the foot of a bird attempting to fly. The truth is, O believer, your soul in this body is, at best, but like a diamond in a ring, where much of it is obscured; it is far sunk in the vile clay, until relieved by death.

I conclude this subject with a few DIRECTIONS how to prepare for death, so that we may die comfortably. I speak not here of habitual preparation for death, which a true Christian, in virtue of his gracious state, never lacks, from the time he is born again, and united to Christ; but of actual preparation, or readiness in respect of his particular case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit; the lack of which makes even a saint very unfit to die.

First, Let it be your constant care to keep a clean conscience, "A conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man," Acts 24:16. Beware of a standing controversy between God and you, on the account of some iniquity regarded in the heart. When an honest man is about to leave his country, and not to return, he settles accounts with those he had dealings with, and lays down methods for paying his debts in due time, lest he be reckoned a bankrupt, and arrested by an officer when he is going off. Guilt lying on the conscience, is a fountain of fears, and will readily sting severely, when death stares the criminal in the face. Hence it is, that many, even of God's children, when dying, wish passionately, and desire eagerly, that they may live to do what they ought to have done before that time.

Therefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict, and exact in your course- beware of loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as you would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit, in a dying hour. And because, through the infirmity cleaving to us, in our present state of imperfection, in many things we offend all, renew your repentance daily, and be ever washing in the Redeemer's blood. As long as you are in the world, you will need to wash your feet, John 13:10, that is, to make application of the blood of Christ anew, for purging your consciences from the guilt of daily miscarriages. Let death find you at the 'fountain'; and, if so, it will find you ready to answer at its call.

Secondly, Be always watchful, waiting for your change, "like unto men that wait for their Lord- that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately," Luke 12:36. Beware of "slumbering and sleeping, while the bridegroom tarries." To be awakened out of spiritual slumber, by a surprising call to pass into another world, is a very frightful thing- but he who is daily waiting for the coming of his Lord, will comfortably receive the 'grim messenger', while he beholds him ushering in him, of whom he may confidently say, "This is my God, and I nave waited for him." The way to die comfortably, is, to die daily! Be often essaying, as it were, to die. Bring yourselves

familiarly acquainted with death, by making many visits to the grave, in serious meditations upon it. This was Job’s practice, Job 27:13-14, "I have made my bed in the darkness." Go and do likewise; and when death comes, you shall have nothing to do but to lie down. "I have said to corruption, You are my father- to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." You say so too; and you will be the fitter to go home to their house. Be frequently reflecting upon your conduct, and considering what course of life you wish to be found in, when death arrests you; and act accordingly. When you do the duties of your station in life, or are employed in acts of worship, think with yourselves, that, it may be, this is the last opportunity; and therefore do it as if you were never to do more of that kind. When you lie down at night, compose your spirits, as if you were not to awake until the heavens be no more. And when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last; and live accordingly. Surely that night comes, of which you will never see the morning; or that morning, of which you will never see the night. But which of your mornings or nights will be such, you know not.

Thirdly, Employ yourselves much in weaning your hearts from the world. The man who is making ready to go abroad, busies himself in taking leave of his friends. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose about you; that it may be easily dropped, when death comes to carry you away into another world. Moderate your affections towards your lawful comforts of life- let not your hearts be too much taken with them. The traveler acts unwisely, who allows himself to be so allured with the ’conveniences of the inn’ where he lodges, as to make his necessary departure from it grievous. Feed with fear, and walk through the world as pilgrims and strangers. Just as, when the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily; so, when a Christian’s heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one- we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us, Matthew 6:21.

01.04b The difference between the Righteous contd

Fourthly, Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven, for your support and comfort at the hour of death. The neglect thereof mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death. Therefore, examine yourselves frequently as to your spiritual state; that evidences which lie hid and unobserved, may be brought to light and taken notice of. And if you would manage this work successfully, make solemn, serious work of it. Set apart some time for it. And, after earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby you are enabled to understand his own word, and to discern his own work in your souls; examine yourselves before the tribunal of your own consciences, that you may judge yourselves, in this weighty matter.

And, in the first place, let the marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord's Word- have recourse to some particular text for that purpose; such as Proverbs 8:17, "I love those who love me." Compare Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Psalms 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." Psalms 18:23, "I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from my iniquity." Compare Romans 7:22-23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man- but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit- for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Php 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship," or serve "God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The sum of the evidence arising from these texts, lies here- a real Christian is one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons, and all things; he has an weighty and impartial regard to God's commands; he opposes and wrestles against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him; he approves and loves the holy law, even in that very point wherein it strikes against his own beloved lust; his hope of heaven engages him to the study of universal holiness; in which he aims at perfection, though he cannot reach it in this life; he serves the Lord, not only in acts of worship, but in the whole of his conversation; and as to both, is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims, and ends of his service; yet he sees nothing in himself to trust to, before the Lord; Christ and his fullness are the stay of his soul; his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ, in point of justification or acceptance with God, and in point of sanctification too. Everyone, in whom these characters are found, has a title to heaven, according to the word. It is convenient and profitable to mark such texts, for this special use, as they occur, while you read the Scriptures, or hear sermons. The marks of a regenerate state thus fixed, in the next place impartially search and test your own hearts thereby, as in the sight of God, with dependence on him for spiritual discernment, that you may know whether they be in you or not. When you find them, form the conclusion deliberately and distinctly; namely, that therefore you are regenerated, and have a title to heaven. Thus you may gather evidences. But be sure to have recourse to God in Christ, by earnest prayer, for the testimony of the Spirit, whose office it is to "bear witness with

our spirit, that we are the children of God," Romans 8:16.

Moreover, carefully observe the course and method of providence towards you; and likewise, how your soul is affected under the same, in the various steps thereof- compare both with Scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and examples- so shall you perceive if the Lord deals with you as he always does unto those who love his name, and if you are going forth by the footsteps of the flock. This may afford you comfortable evidence. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, and the Lord will manifest himself to you, according to his promise, John 14:21, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But it is in vain to think of successful self-examination, if you are loose and irregular in your walk.

Lastly, Dispatch the work of your day and generation with speed and diligence. David, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep" Acts 13:36. God has allotted us certain pieces of work of this kind, which ought to be dispatched before the time of working be over, Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might- for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going." Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith." If a passenger, after he has gotten on ship, and the ship is getting under sail, remembers that he has omitted to dispatch a piece of necessary business when be was ashore, it must needs be uneasy to him. Even so, reflection in a dying hour upon neglected seasons, and lost opportunities, cannot fail to disquiet a Christian. Therefore, whatever is incumbent upon you to do for God’s honor, and the good of others, either as the duty of your station, or by special opportunity put into your hand, perform it seasonably, if you would die comfortably.

01.04c Resurrection

THE RESURRECTION From Thomas Boston’s "Human Nature in its Fourfold State"

"Marvel not at this- for the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves shall hear his voice- and shall come forth; those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28-29

These words are part of the defense which our Lord Jesus Christ makes for himself, when persecuted by the Jews, for curing the impotent man and ordering him to carry away his bed on the Sabbath; and for vindicating his conduct, when accused by them of having thereby profaned that day. On this occasion he professes himself not only the Lord of the Sabbath, but also Lord of life and death; declaring, in the words of the text, the resurrection of the dead to be brought to pass by his power. This he introduces with these words, as with a solemn preface, "Marvel not at this,"- at this strange discourse of mine- do not wonder to hear me, whose appearance is so very base in your eyes; for the day is coming, in which the dead shall be raised by my power.

Observe in this text,

1. The doctrine of the resurrection asserted, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." The dead bodies, which are reduced to dust, shall revive, and evidence life by hearing and moving.

2. The author of it- Jesus Christ, "the Son of man," John 5:27. The dead shall hear his voice, and be raised thereby.

3. The number that shall be raised, "All that are in the graves," that is, all the dead bodies of men, howsoever differently disposed of, in different kinds of graves; or all the dead, good and bad. They are not all buried in graves, properly so called- some are burnt to ashes; some drowned, and buried in the bellies of fish; yes, some devoured by man-eaters, called cannibals; but, wherever the matter or substance of which the body was composed is to be found, thence they shall come forth.

4. The great distinction that shall be made between the godly and the wicked- they shall indeed both rise again in the resurrection. None of the godly shall be missing; though, perhaps, they either had no burial, or a very obscure one; and all the wicked shall come forth; their vaulted tombs shall hold them no longer than the voice is uttered. But the former have a joyful resurrection to life, while the latter have a dreadful resurrection to damnation.

5. The set time of this great event- there is an hour, or certain fixed period of time, appointed of God for it. We are not told when that hour will be, but that it is coming; for this, among other reasons, that we may always be ready.

Doctrine. There shall be a resurrection of the dead. In discoursing of this subject, I shall- I. Show the certainty of the resurrection.

II. I shall inquire into the nature of it.

III. And, Lastly, make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. In showing the CERTAINTY of the resurrection, I shall evince, 1. That God can raise the dead. 2. That he will do it; which are the two grounds or topics laid down by Christ himself, when disputing with the Sadducees, Matthew 22:29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, you do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Seeing God is almighty, surely he can raise the dead. We have instances of this powerful work of God, both in the Old and New Testament. The son of the widow in Sarepta was raised from the dead, 1 Kings 17:22; the Shunammite's son, 2 Kings 4:35; and the man "cast into the sepulcher of Elisha," 2 Kings 13:21. In which we may observe a gradation, the second of these miraculous events being more illustrious than the first, and the third than the second. The first of these persons was raised when he was but newly dead; the prophet Elijah, who raised him being present at his decease. The second, when he had lain dead a considerable time; namely, while his mother traveled from Shunem, to mount Carmel, reckoned about the distance of sixteen miles, and returned from thence to her house, with Elisha, who raised him. The last, not until they were burying him, and the corpse was cast into the prophet's grave. In like manner, in the New Testament, Jairus's daughter, Mark 5:41, and Dorcas, Acts 9:40, were both raised to life, when lately dead; the widow's son in Nain, when they were carrying him out to bury him, Luke 12:11-15; and Lazarus, when putrid in the grave, John 11:39, John 11:44. Can men make curious glasses out of ashes, reduce flowers into ashes, and raise them again out of these ashes, restoring them to their former beauty? And cannot the great Creator, who made all things of nothing, raise man's body, after it is reduced into the dust? If it be objected, "How can men's bodies be raised up again, after they are reduced to dust, and the ashes of many generations are mingled together?" Scripture and reason furnish the answer, "With men it is impossible, but not with God." It is absurd for men to deny that God can do a thing, because they see not how it may be done. How small a portion do we know of his ways! How absolutely incapable are we of conceiving distinctly of the extent of almighty power, and much more of comprehending its actings, and method of procedure! I question not, but many illiterate men are as great unbelievers as to many chemical experiments, as some learned men are to the doctrine of the resurrection- and as these last are ready to deride the former, so, "the Lord will have them in derision."

What a mystery was it to the Indians, that the Europeans could, by a piece of paper, converse together at the distance of some hundreds of miles! How much were they astonished to see them, with their guns, produce as it were thunder and lightning in a moment, and at pleasure kill men afar off! Shall some men do such things as are wonders in the eyes of others because they cannot comprehend them, and shall men confine the infinite power of God within the narrow boundaries of their own shallow capacities, in a matter no ways contrary to reason! An inferior nature has but a very imperfect conception of the power of a superior. Brutes do not conceive of the actings of reason in men; and men have but imperfect notions of the power of angels- how low and inadequate a conception, then, must a finite nature have of the power of that which is infinite! Though we cannot conceive how God acts, yet we ought to believe he can do above what we can think or conceive.

Therefore, let the bodies of men be laid in the grave; let them rot there, and be reduced into the most minute particles- or let them be burnt, and the ashes cast into rivers, or thrown up into the air, to be scattered by the wind- let the dust of a thousand generations be mingled, and the steams of the dead bodies wander to and fro in the air- let birds or wild beasts eat the bodies, or the fish of the sea devour them, so that the parts of human bodies, thus destroyed, pass into substantial parts of birds, beasts or fish; or, what is more that that, let man-eaters, who themselves must die and rise again, devour human bodies, and let others devour them again, and then let our modern Sadducees propose the questions in these cases, as the ancient Sadducees did in the case of the woman who had been married to seven husbands successively, Matthew 22:28. We answer, as our blessed Lord and Savior did, Matthew 22:29, "You do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." We believe God to be omniscient and omnipotent; infinite in knowledge and in power- and hence, agreeably to the dictates of reason, we conclude the possibility of the resurrection, even in the cases supposed.

Material things may change their forms and shapes, may be reduced to the principles of which they are formed- but they are not annihilated, or reduced to nothing; nor can they be so, by any created power. God is omniscient, his understanding is infinite; therefore he knows all things; what they were at any time, what they are, and where they are to be found. Though the countryman, who comes into the apothecary’s shop, cannot find out the drug he wants; yet the apothecary himself knows what he has in his shop, whence it came, and where it is to be found. And, in a mixture of many different seeds, the expert gardener can distinguish between each of them. Why then may not Omniscience distinguish between dust and dust? Can he, who knows all things to perfection, be liable to any mistake about his own creatures? Whoever believes an infinite understanding, must needs own, that no mass of dust is so jumbled together, but God perfectly comprehends, and infallibly knows, how the most minute particle, and every one of them is to be matched.

II. I shall inquire into the NATURE of the resurrection, showing, 1. Who shall be raised.

2. What shall be raised.

3. How the dead shall be raised.

1. WHO shall be raised? Our text tells us who they are; namely "all that are in the graves," that is, all mankind who are dead. As for those people who are found alive at the second coming of Christ, they shall not die, and soon after be raised again; but such a change shall suddenly pass upon them as shall be to them instead of dying and rising again; so that their bodies shall become like lo those bodies which are raised out of their graves, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Hence those who are to be judged at the great day, are distinguished into living and dead, Acts 10:42. All the dead shall arise, whether godly or wicked, just or unjust, Acts 24:15, old or young; the whole race of mankind, even those who never saw the sun, but died in their mother’s womb- Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." The sea and earth shall give up their dead without reserve, none shall be kept back.

2. WHAT shall be raised? The bodies of mankind. A man is said to die, when the soul is separated from the body, "and returns onto God who gave it," Ecclesiastes 12:7. But it is the body only which

is laid in the grave, and can be properly said to be raised- therefore the resurrection, strictly speaking, applies to the body only. Moreover, it is the same body that dies, which shall rise again. At the resurrection, men shall not appear with other bodies, as to substance, than those which they now have, and which are laid down in the grave; but with the self-same bodies, endowed with other qualities. The very notion of a resurrection implies this, since nothing can be said to rise again, but that which falls.

3. HOW shall the dead be raised? The same Jesus, who was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, shall, at the last day, to the conviction of all, be declared both Lord and Christ- appearing as Judge of the world, attended with his mighty angels, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, "He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God," 1 Thessalonians 4:16, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and those who are alive, changed," 1 Corinthians 15:52. Whether this shout, voice, and trumpet, denote some audible voice, or only the workings of Divine power, for the raising of the dead, and other dreadful purposes of that day, though the former seems probable, I will not positively determine. There is no question but this coming of the Judge of the world will be in greater majesty and terror than we can conceive- yet that dreadful grandeur, majesty, and state, which was displayed at the giving of the law, namely, thunders heard, lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount seen, the Lord descending in fire, the whole mount quaking greatly, and the voice of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, Exodus 19:16-19, may help us to form a becoming thought of it. However, the sound of this trumpet shall be heard all the world over; it shall reach to the depths of the sea, and of the earth. At this loud alarm, bones shall come together, bone to his bone- the scattered dust of all the dead shall be gathered together, dust to his dust; "neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path;" and, meeting together again, shall make up that very same body which crumbled into dust in the grave. At the same alarming voice shall every soul come again into its own body, never more to be separated. The dead can stay no longer in their graves, but must bid an eternal farewell to their long homes- they hear His voice, and must come forth, and receive their final sentence.

Now as there is a great difference between the godly and the wicked, in their life, and in their death; so will there be also in their resurrection. The godly shall be raised out of their graves, by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, the blessed bond of their union with him, Romans 8:11, "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwells in you." Jesus Christ arose from the dead, as the "first-fruits of those who slept," 1 Corinthians 15:20, So those who are Christ’s shall follow at his coming, 1 Corinthians 15:23. The mystical head having got above the waters of death, he cannot but bring forth the members after him, in due time.

They shall come forth with inexpressible joy; for then shall that passage of Scripture, which, in its immediate scope, respected the Babylonish captivity, be fully accomplished in its most extensive meaning, Isaiah 26:19, "Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust." As a bride adorned for her husband, goes forth of her bedchamber unto the marriage- so shall the saints go forth of their graves, unto the marriage of the Lamb. Joseph had a joyful coming out from the prison, Daniel from the lion’s den, and Jonah from the whale’s belly- yet these are but faint representations of the saint’s coming forth from the grave, at the resurrection. Then shall they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, in highest strains; death being quite swallowed up in victory. They had, while in this life, sometimes sung, by faith the triumphant song over death and the grave, "O death, where

is your sting? O grave where is your victory?" But then they sing the same, from sight and sense; the black band of doubts and fears, which frequently disturbed them, and disturbed their minds, is forever dispersed and driven away. May we not suppose the soul and body of every saint, as in mutual embraces, to rejoice in each other, and triumph in their happy meeting again; and the BODY to address the soul thus- "O my soul, have we got together again, after so long a separation! are you come back to your old habitation, never more to remove! O joyful meeting! how unlike is our present state to what our case was, when a separation was made between us at death! Now is our mourning turned into joy; the light and gladness sown before, are now sprung up; and there is a perpetual spring in Immanuel's land. Blessed be the day in which I was united to you; whose chief care was to get Christ in us the hope of glory, and to make me a temple for his Holy Spirit. O blessed soul, which in the time of our pilgrimage, kept your eye to the land then afar off, but now near at hand! you took me into secret places, and there made me to bow these knees before the Lord, that I might bear a part in our humiliation before him- and now is the time that I am lifted up. You did employ this tongue in confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, which henceforth shall be employed in praising for evermore. You made these sometimes weeping eyes, sow that seed of tears, which is now sprung up in joy that shall never end. I was happily beat down by you, and kept in subjection, while others pampered their flesh, and made their bellies their gods, to their own destruction- but now I gloriously arise, to take my place in the mansions of glory, while they are dragged out of their graves to be cast into fiery flames. Now, my soul, you shall complain no more of a sick and pained body; you shall be no more clogged with weak and weary flesh; I shall now keep pace with you in the praises of our God for evermore." And may not the SOUL say- "O happy day in which I return to dwell in that blessed body, which was, and is, and will be forever, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit! Now I shall be eternally knit to you- the silver cord shall never be loosed more- death shall never make another separation between us. Arise then, my body, and come away! And let these eyes, which were used to weep over my sins, behold with joy the face of our glorious Redeemer; lo! this is our God, and we have waited for him. Let these ears, which were used to hear the word of life in the temple below, come and hear the hallelujahs in the temple above. Let these feet, that carried me to the congregation of saints on earth, take their place among those in heaven. And let this tongue, which confessed Christ before men, and used to be still dropping something to his commendation, join the choir of the upper house, in his praises for evermore. You shall fast no more, but keep an everlasting feast; you shall weep no more, neither shall your countenance be overclouded; but you shall shine forever, as a star in the skies. We took part together in the fight; come, let us go together to receive and wear the crown." But on the other hand, the WICKED shall be raised by the power of Christ, as a just Judge, who is to render vengeance to his enemies. The same divine power which shut up their souls in hell, and kept their bodies in the grave, as in a prison, shall bring them forth, that soul and body together may receive the dreadful sentence of eternal damnation, and be shut up together in the prison of hell.

They shall come forth from their graves with unspeakable horror and consternation. They shall be dragged forth, as so many malefactors out of a dungeon, to be led to execution crying to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the Lamb. Fearful was the cry in Egypt, that night on which the destroying angel went through, and slew their first-born. Dreadful were the shouts, at the earth opening her mouth, and swallowing up Dathan and Abiram, and all that appertained to them. What hideous crying then must there be, when at the sound of

the last trumpet, the earth and sea shall open their mouths, and cast forth all the wicked world, delivering them up to the dreadful Judge! How will they cry, roar, and tear themselves! How will the jovial companions weep and howl, and curse one another! How will the earth be filled with their doleful shrieks and lamentations, while they are pulled out like sheep for the slaughter!

They who, while they lived in this world, were profane, debauchees, covetous worldlings, or formal hypocrites, shall then, in anguish of mind, wring their hands, beat their breasts, and bitterly lament their case, roaring forth their complaints, and calling themselves beasts, fools, and madmen, for having acted so mad a part in this life, in not believing what they then heard. They were driven away in their wickedness at death- and now all their sins rise with them; and, like so many serpents, twist themselves about their wretched souls, and bodies too, which have a frightful meeting, after a long separation.

Then we may suppose the miserable BODY thus to accost the soul- "Have you again found me, O mine enemy, my worst enemy, savage soul, more cruel than a thousand tigers. Cursed be the day that ever we met. O that I had remained a lifeless lump, rotted in the womb of my mother, and had never received sense, life, and motion! O that I had rather been the body of a toad, or serpent, than your body; for then had I lain still, and had not seen this terrible day. If I was to be necessarily yours, O that I had been your donkey, or one of your dogs, rather than your body; for then would you have taken more true care of me than you did! O cruel kindness! have you thus hugged me to death, thus nourished me to the slaughter? Is this the effect of your tenderness for me? Is this what I am to reap of your pains and concern about me? What do riches and pleasures avail now, when this fearful reckoning is come! of which you had fair warning? O cruel grave! why did you not close your mouth upon me forever? Why did you not hold fast your prisoner? Why have you shaken me out, while I lay still and was at rest? Cursed soul, wherefore did you not abide in your place, wrapped up in flames of fire? Wherefore are you come back, to take me also down to the bars of the pit? You made me an instrument of unrighteousness; and now I must be thrown into the fire. This tongue was by you employed in mocking at religion, cursing, swearing, lying, backbiting, and boasting; and withheld from glorifying God- and now it must not have so much as a drop of water to cool it in the flames! You withdrew mine ears from hearing the sermons which gave warning of this day. You found ways and means to stop them from attending to seasonable exhortations, admonitions, and reproofs. But why did you not stop them from hearing the sound of this dreadful trumpet? Why do you not rove and fly away on the wings of imagination, thereby, as it were, transporting me during these frightful transactions; as you were used to do, when I was set down at sermons, communions, prayers, and godly conferences; that I might now have as little sense of the one, as I formerly had of the other? But ah! I must burn forever, for your love to your lusts, your profanity, your sensuality, your unbelief, and hypocrisy." But may not the SOUL answer– "Wretched and vile carcass! I am now driven back into you. O that you had lain forever in your grave! Had I not torment enough before? Must I be knit to you again, that, being joined together as two dry sticks for the fire, the wrath of God may burn us up? It was by caring for you, that I lost myself. It was your appetites, and the gratifying of your senses, which ruined me. How often was I ensnared by your ears! how often betrayed by your eyes! It was to spare you, that I neglected opportunities of making peace with God, loitered away Sabbaths, lived in the neglect of prayer; went to the house of mirth, rather than to the house of mourning; and that I chose to deny Christ, and forsake his cause and interest in the world; and so am fallen a sacrifice to your cursed

ease. When at any time my conscience began to awake, and I was setting myself to think of my sins, and the misery which I have felt since we parted, and now feel, it was you that diverted me from these thoughts, and drew me off to make provision for you. O wretched flesh! by your silken cords of fleshly lusts, I was drawn to destruction, in defiance of my light and conscience- but now they are turned into iron chains, with which I am to be held under wrath for evermore. Ah wretched profits! ah cursed pleasures! for which I must lie forever in utter darkness!" But no complaints will then avail. O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! As to the qualities with which the bodies of the SAINTS shall be endowed at the resurrection, the apostle tells us, they shall be raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

1. The bodies of the saints shall be raised INCORRUPTIBLE. They are now, as the bodies of others, a mass of corruption, full of the seeds of diseases and death; and, when dead, become so offensive, even to their dearest friends, that they must be buried out of their sight, and cast into the grave, where they are to rot, and be consumed- yes, loathsome sores and diseases make some of them very unsightly, even while alive. But, at the resurrection, they leave all the seeds of corruption behind them in the grave; and rise incorruptible, incapable of the least indisposition, sickness, or sore, and much more, of dying. External violences and inward causes of pain, shall forever cease- they shall feel it no more- yes, they shall have an everlasting youth and vigor, being no more subject to the decays which age produced in this life.

2. They shall be GLORIOUS bodies; not only beautiful, lovely, and well-proportioned, but full of splendor and brightness. The most beautiful face, and best proportioned body, that now appears in the world, is not to be named in comparison with the body of the lowest saint at the resurrection; for "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun," Matthew 13:43. If there was a dazzling glory on Moses' face, when he came down from the mount; and if Stephen's face was "as it had been the face of an angel," when he stood before the council; how much more shall the faces of the saints be beautiful and glorious, full of sweet agreeable majesty, when they have put off all corruption, and shine as the sun! But observe, this beauty of the saints is not restricted to their faces, but diffuses itself through their whole bodies- for the whole body is raised in glory, and shall be fashioned like unto their Lord and Savior's glorious body, in whose transfiguration, not only did his face shine as the sun, but his clothing also was white as the light, Matthew 17:2. Whatever defects or deformities the bodies of the saints had when laid in the grave, occasioned by accidents in life, or arising from secret causes in their formation in the womb, they shall rise out of the grave free of all these. But suppose the marks of the Lord Jesus, the scars or prints of the wounds and bruises which some of the saints received while on earth, for his sake, should remain in their bodies after the resurrection; the same as the print of the nails remained in the Lord Jesus' body after his resurrection- these marks will rather be badges of distinction, and add to their glory, than detract from their beauty. But however that be, surely Isaac's eyes shall not then be dim, nor will Jacob halt- Leah shall not be tender-eyed, nor Mephibosheth lame of his legs. For as the goldsmith melts down the old broken vessel, and casts it over again in a new mold, bringing it forth with a new luster; so shall the vile body, which lay dissolved in the grave, come forth at the resurrection, in perfect beauty and lovely proportion.

3. They shall be POWERFUL and strong bodies. The strongest men on earth, being frail and mortal, may justly be reckoned weak and feeble; for their strength, however great, is quickly worn out and consumed. Many of the saints now have weaker bodies than others; but "the feeble among them," to allude to Zechariah 12:8, at that day shall be "as David, and the house of David shall be as God." A grave divine says, that one shall be stronger at the resurrection than a hundred, yes, than thousands are now. Certainly great, and vastly great, must the strength of glorified bodies be; for they shall bear up under an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The mortal body is not at all adapted to such a state. Do transports of joy occasion death, as well as excessive grief, and can it bear up under a weight of glory? Can it exist in union with a soul filled with heaven's rapture? Surely not. The mortal body would sink under that load, and such fullness of joy would make the earthen pitcher to fly all in pieces. The Scripture has plainly told us, "That flesh and blood," namely, in their present frail state, though it were the flesh and blood of a giant, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Corinthians 15:50. How strong must the bodily eyes be, which, to the soul's eternal comfort, shall behold the dazzling glory and splendor of the New Jerusalem; and steadfastly look at the transcendent glory and brightness of the man Christ, the Lamb, who is the light of that city, the inhabitants whereof shall shine as the sun! The Lord of heaven does now in mercy "hold back the face of his throne, and spreads his clouds upon it;" that mortals may not be confounded with the rays of glory which shine forth from it, Job 26:9. But then the veil shall be removed, and they made able to behold it, to their unspeakable joy. How strong must their bodies be, who shall not rest night nor day, but be, without intermission, forever employed in the heavenly temple, to sing and proclaim the praises of God without weariness, which is a weakness incident to the frail mortal, but not to the glorified body!

4. They shall be SPIRITUAL bodies. Not that they shall be changed into spirits, but they shall be spiritual as to their spirit-like qualities and endowments. The body shall be absolutely subservient to the soul, subject to it, and influenced by it, and therefore no more a clog to its activity, nor the animal appetites a snare to it. There will be no need to beat it down, nor to drag it to the service of God. The soul, in this life is so much influenced by the body, that, in Scripture style, it is said to be carnal; but then the body shall be spiritual, readily serving the soul in the business of heaven, and in that only, as if it had no more relation to earth than a spirit. It will have no further need of the now necessary supports of life, namely, food, and clothing, and the like. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," Revelation 7:16. "For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Then shall the saints be strong without food or drink, warm without clothes, ever in perfect health without medicine, and ever fresh and vigorous, though they shall never sleep, but serve him night and day in his temple, Revelation 7:15. They will need none of these things, any more than spirits do. They will be nimble and active as spirits, and of a most refined constitution. The body, that is now lumpish and heavy, shall then be most sprightly. No such thing as melancholy shall be found to make the heart heavy, and the spirits flag and sink. I shall not further dip into this matter- the day will declare it. As to the qualities of the bodies of the WICKED at the resurrection, I find the Scripture speaks but little of them. Whatever they may need, they shall not get a drop of water to cool their tongues, Luke 16:24-25. Whatever may be said of their weakness, it is certain they will be continued forever in life, that they may be ever dying; they shall bear up, however unwillingly under the load of God's wrath, and shall not faint away under it. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever. And they have no rest day nor night." Surely they shall not partake of the glory and beauty of the saints. All

their glory dies with them, and shall never rise again. Daniel tells us, they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt, Daniel 12:2. Shame follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. But the wicked in this world walk in the dark, and often under a disguise- nevertheless, when the Judge comes in flaming fire at the last day, they will be brought to the light; their mask will be taken off, and the shame of their nakedness will clearly appear to themselves and others, and fill their faces with confusion. Their shame will be too deep for blushes- all faces shall gather blackness at that day, when they shall go forth from their graves, as malefactors out of their prisons to execution- for their resurrection is the resurrection of damnation. The greatest beauties, who now pride themselves in their loveliness of body, not regarding their deformed souls, will then appear with a ghastly countenance, a grim and death-like visage. Their looks will be frightful, and they will be horrible spectacles, coming forth from their graves, like infernal furies out of the pit.

They shall rise also to everlasting contempt. They shall then be the most contemptible creatures, filled with contempt from God, as vessels of dishonor, whatever honorable employments they had in this world; and filled also with contempt from men. They will be most despicable in the eyes of the saints; even of those saints who gave them honor here, either for their high station, the gifts of God in them, or because they were of the same human nature with themselves. But then their bodies shall be as so many loathsome carcasses, which they shall go forth and look upon with abhorrence; yes, "They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh," Isaiah 66:24. The word here rendered "an abhorring," is the same which in the other text is rendered "contempt," and Isaiah and Daniel point at one and the same thing, namely, the loathsomeness of the wicked at the resurrection. They will be loathsome in the eyes of one another. The unclean wretches were never so lovely to each other, and then they will be loathsome; dear companions in sin will then abhor each other; and the great and honorable men who were wicked, shall be no more regarded by their wicked subjects, their servants, their slaves, than the mire in the streets.

Use I. Of COMFORT to the people of God. The doctrine of the resurrection is a spring of consolation and joy unto you. Think on it, O believers, when you are in the house of mourning, for the loss of your godly relations or friends, "that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope;" for you will meet again, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. They are but laid down to rest in their beds for a little while, Isaiah 57:2; but in the morning of the resurrection they will awake again, and come forth out of their graves. The vessel of honor was but coarse, it had much alloy of base metal in it; it was too weak, too dim and inglorious, for the upper house, whatever luster it had in the lower one. It was cracked, it was polluted; and therefore it must be melted down, to be refined and fashioned more gloriously. Do but wait a while, and you shall see it come forth out of the furnace of earth, vying with the stars in brightness; no, as the sun when he goes forth in his might. Have you laid your infant children in the grave? You will see them again. Your God calls himself "the God of your seed;" which, according to our Savior’s exposition, secures the glorious resurrection of the body. Therefore, let the covenant you embraced for yourselves and your babes now in the dust, comfort your heart, in the joyful expectation, that by virtue thereof, they shall be raised up in glory- and that as being no more infants of days, but brought to a full and perfect stature, as generally supposed. Be not discouraged by reason of a weak and sickly body- there is a day coming, when you shall be entirely whole. At the resurrection, Timothy shall bo no more liable to his often infirmities; his body, that was weak and sickly, even in youth, shall be raised in power. Lazarus shall healthy and sound, his body being raised incorruptible. Although perhaps, your weakness will

not allow you now to go one furlong to meet the Lord in public ordinances, yet the day comes, when your body shall be no more a clog to you, but you shall "meet the Lord in the air," 1 Thessalonians 4:17. It will be with the saints coming up from the grave, as with the Israelites when they came out of Egypt- "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." Have you an unlovely or deformed body? There is a glory within, which will then set all right without, according to all the desire of your heart. It shall rise a glorious, beautiful, handsome, and well-proportioned body. It's unloveliness or deformities may go with it to the grave, but they shall not come back with it. O that those, who are now so desirous to be beautiful and handsome, would not be too hasty to effect it with their foolish and sinful arts, but wait and study the heavenly art of beautifying the body, by endeavoring now to become all glorious within, with the graces of God's Spirit! This would at length make them admirable and everlasting beauties. You must indeed, O believer, grapple with death, and shall get the first fall- but you shall rise again, and come off victorious at last. You must go down to the grave; but, though it be your long home, it will not be your everlasting home. You will not hear the voice of your friends there; but you shall hear the voice of Christ there. You may be carried there with mourning, but you shall come up from it rejoicing. Your friends, indeed, will leave you there, but your God will not. What God said to Jacob, concerning his going down to Egypt, Genesis 46:3-4, he says to you, on your going down to the grave, "Fear not to go down- I will go down with you- and I will also surely bring you up again." O solid comfort! O glorious hopes! "Therefore comfort" yourselves, and "one another with these words," 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

Use 2. Of TERROR to all unregenerate men. You who are yet in your natural state, look at this view of the eternal state; and consider what will be your part in it, if you be not in time brought into a state of grace. Think, O sinner, on that day when the trumpet shall sound, at the voice of which the bars of the pit shall be broken asunder, the doors of the grave shall fly open, the devouring depths of the sea shall throw up their dead, the earth cast forth hers; and death every where, in the excess of astonishment, shall let go its prisoners; and your wretched soul and body shall be re-united, to be summoned before the tribunal of God. Then, if you had a thousand worlds at your disposal, you would gladly give them all away, on condition that you might lie still in your grave, with the hundredth part of that ease, with which you have sometimes lain at home on the Lord's day; or, if that cannot be obtained, that you might be but a spectator of the transactions of that day; as you have been at some solemn occasions, and rich gospel feasts; or, if even that is not to be purchased, that a mountain or a rock might fall on you, and cover you from the face of the Lamb.

Ah! how are men infatuated, thus to trifle away their precious time of life, in almost as little concern about death, as if they were like the beasts that perish! Some will be telling where their corpse must be laid; while yet they have not seriously considered, whether their graves shall be their beds, where they shall awake with joy, in the morning of the resurrection; or their prisons, out of which they shall be brought to receive the fearful sentence. Remember, now is your seed-time; and as yon sow, so shall you reap. God's seed-time begins at death; and at the resurrection, the bodies of the wicked, that were sown "full of sins, that lie down with them in the dust," Job 20:11, shall spring up again- sinful, wretched, and vile. Your bodies, which are now instruments of sin, the Lord will lay aside for fire, at death, and bring them forth for the fire, at the resurrection. That body, which is now employed in God's service, but is abused by uncleanness and lasciviousness, will then be brought forth in all its vileness, thenceforth to lodge with unclean spirits. The body of the

drunkard shall then stagger, by reason of the wine of the wrath of God poured out to him, and poured into him, without mixture. Those who now please themselves in their reveling, will reel to and fro and another rate, when, instead of their songs and music, they shall hear the sound of the last trumpet. Many weary their bodies for worldly gain, who will be loath to distress them for the benefit of their souls; by labor, unreasonably hard, they will quite unfit themselves for the service of God; and, when they have done, will reckon it a very good reason for shifting duty, that they are already tired out with other business; but that day comes, when they will be made to abide a yet greater distress. Many will go several miles for food and clothing, who will not go half the way for the good of their immortal souls; many will be sickly and unable on the Lord's day, who will be tolerably well all the rest of the week. But when that trumpet sounds, the dead shall find their feet, and none shall be missing in that congregation. When the bodies of the saints shine as the sun; frightful will the looks of their persecutors be. Fearful will their condition be, who shut up the saints in nasty prisons, stigmatized, burnt them to ashes, hanged them, and stuck up their heads and hands in public places, to frighten others from the way of righteousness, which they suffered for. Many faces, now fair, will then gather blackness. They shall be no more admired and caressed for that beauty, which has a worm at the root, that will cause it to issue in loathsomeness and deformity. Ah! what is that beauty, under which there lurks a monstrous, deformed, and graceless heart? What, but a sorry paint, a slight varnish; which will leave the body so much the more ugly, before that flaming fire, in which the Judge shall be "revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel?" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and not have a rag to cover their nakedness- their carcasses shall be an abhorrence to all flesh, and serve as a foil to set off the beauty and glory of the righteous, and make it appear the brighter.

Now is the time to secure, for yourselves, a part in the resurrection of the just- which if you would do, unite with Jesus Christ by faith, rising spiritually from sin, and glorifying God with your bodies. He is the "resurrection and the life," John 11:25. If your bodies be members of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, they shall certainly arise in glory. Get into this ark now, and you shall come forth with joy into the new world. Rise from your sins; cast away these grave-clothes, putting off your former lusts. How can anyone imagine, that those who continue dead while they live, shall come forth, at the last day, unto the resurrection of life? But that will be the privilege of all those who, having first consecrated their souls and bodies to the Lord by faith, do glorify him with their bodies, as well as their souls; living and acting to him, and for him, yes, and suffering for him too, when he calls them to it.

01.04d The General Judgment

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) The General Judgment

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" Matthew 25:31-34

"Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matthew 25:41; Matthew 25:46 The dead being raised, and those found alive at the coming of the Judge changed, then follows the general judgment, plainly and solemnly described in this portion of Scripture; in which we shall take notice of the following particulars:

1. The coming of the Judge. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory," etc. The Judge is Jesus Christ, by whose almighty power, the dead will be raised. He is also called the King, Matthew 25:34, the judging of the world being an act of the royal Mediator's kingly office. He will come in glory; glorious in His own person, and having a glorious retinue, even all the holy angels with Him, to minister unto Him at this great solemnity.

2. The mounting the tribunal. He is a King, and therefore it is a throne, a glorious throne, "He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory," Matthew 25:31.

3. The appearance of the parties. These are--all nations; all and every one, small and great, of whatever nation, who ever were, are, or shall be on the face of the earth. All shall be gathered before Him, summoned before His tribunal.

4. The separating of them. He shall separate the elect sheep and reprobate goats, setting each group by themselves. The godly He will set on His right hand, as the most honorable place; the wicked on the left, Matthew 25:33.

5. The sentencing of the parties, and that according to their works; the righteous being absolved, and the wicked condemned, Matthew 25:34-41.

6. The execution of both sentences, in the driving away of the wicked into hell, and carrying the godly to heaven, Matthew 25:46.

Doctrine. There shall be a general judgment. This doctrine, I shall,

I. Confirm.

II. Explain.

III. Apply.

I. The CONFIRMATION of this great truth—that there shall be a general judgment.

1. It is evident from plain Scripture testimonies. The world has in all ages been told of it. Enoch, before the flood, taught it in his prophecy, related in Jude 1:14-15, "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all," etc. Daniel describes it, Daniel 7:9-10, "I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, and a river of fire flowed from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened." The apostle is very express, Acts 17:31, "He has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained." See Matthew 16:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:11-15. God not only said it, but he has sworn it, Romans 14:10-11, "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God." So that the truth of God is most solemnly pledged for it.

2. The perfect justice and goodness of God, the sovereign ruler of the world, necessarily require it, inasmuch as they require its being well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Yet we often see wickedness exalted, while truth and righteousness fall in the streets; piety oppressed, while profanity and irreligion triumph. This is so very common, that everyone who sincerely embraces the way of holiness, must and does lay his account with the loss of all he has, which the world can take away from him, Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." But it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, that the affairs of men should always continue in the state which they appear in, from one generation to another; and that every man should not be rewarded according to his works: and since that is not done in this life, there must be a judgment to come; "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7. There will be a day in which the tables will be turned; and the wicked shall be called to an account for all their sins, and suffer the due punishment of them; and the pious shall be prosperous: for, as the apostle argues for the happy resurrection of the saints, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Corinthians 15:19.

It is true, God sometimes punishes the wicked in this life: that men may know, "He is a God who judges in the earth;" but yet much wickedness remains unpunished and undiscovered, to be a pledge of the judgment to come. If none of the wicked were punished here, they would conclude that God had utterly forsaken the earth; if all of them were punished in this life, men would be apt to think there were no after reckoning. Therefore, in the wisdom of God some are punished now, and some not. Sometimes the Lord smites sinners, in the very act of sin; to show unto the world, that he is witness to all their wickedness, and will call them to an account for it. Sometimes he delays long before he strikes, that he may discover to the world that he forgets not men’s ill deeds, though he does not immediately punish them. Besides all this, the sins of many outlive them; and the impure fountain opened by them, runs long after they are dead and gone. As in the case of

Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, whose sin ran all along unto the end of that unhappy kingdom, 2 Kings 17:22-23, "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam, which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight."

3. The resurrection of Christ is a certain proof, that there shall be a day of judgment. This argument Paul uses to convince the Athenians, that Jesus Christ will be the Judge of the world: "Whereof," says he, "he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead," Acts 17:31. The Judge is already named, his patent written and sealed, yes, and read before all men, in his rising again from the dead. Hereby God has given assurance of it: by raising Christ from the dead, he has exhibited his credentials as Judge of the world. When, in the days of his humiliation, he was cited before a tribunal, arraigned, accused, and condemned by men; he plainly told them of this judgment, and that he himself would be the Judge, Matthew 26:64, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And now that he is raised from the dead, though condemned as a blasphemer on this very head, is it not an undeniable proof, from Heaven, of the truth of what he asserted? Moreover, this was one of the great ends of Christ's death and resurrection: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord," that is, "the Lord Judge," as is evident from the context, "both of the dead and of the living," Romans 14:9.

4. Every man bears about with him a witness to this within his own bosom, Romans 2:15, "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." There is a tribunal erected within every man, where conscience is accuser, witness, and judge, binding over the sinner to the judgment of God. This fills the most profligate wretches with horror, and inwardly stings them, upon the commission of some atrocious crime; in effect summoning them to answer for it, before the Judge of the living and dead. And thus it does, even when the crime is secret, and hidden from the eyes of the world. It reaches those, whom the laws of men cannot reach, because of their power or craftiness. Men have fled from the judgment of their fellow-creatures; yet go where they will, conscience as the supreme Judge's officer, still keeps hold of them, reserving them in its chains, to the judgment of the great day. And whether they escape punishment from men, or fall by the hand of public justice, when they perceive death's approach, they hear from within, of this after reckoning; being constrained to hearken thereto, in these the most serious minutes of their lives.

If there are some, in whom nothing of this does appear, we have no more ground thence to conclude against it, than we have to conclude, that because some men do not groan, therefore they have no pain; or that dying is a mere jest, because there have been some who seemed to make little else of it. A good face may be put upon an bad conscience; the more hopeless men's case is, they reckon it more their interest to make no reflections on their state and case. But everyone, who will consult himself seriously, will find in himself the witness to the judgment to come. Even the heathens had a notion of it, though mixed with fictions of their own. Hence, though some of the Athenians, "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, mocked," yet there is no account of their mocking, when they heard of the general judgment, Acts 17:31-32.

II. The EXPLANATION of this great truth—that there shall be a general judgment. For explanation, the following particulars may serve to give some view of the transactions of that great day.

1. God shall judge the world by Jesus Christ. "He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained," Acts 17:31. The psalmist tells us, that God is judge himself, Psalms 50:6. The holy blessed Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - is Judge, in respect to judicial authority, dominion, and power: but the Son incarnate is the Judge, in respect of dispensation, and special exercise of that power. The judgment shall be exercised or performed by him as the royal Mediator; for he has delegated power of judgment from the Father, as his servant, "his King," whom he has "set upon his holy hill of Zion," Psalms 2:6, and to whom he "has committed all judgment," John 5:22. This is a part of the Mediator's exaltation, given him in consequence of his voluntary humiliation, Php 2:8-10, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name," that is, power and authority over all, namely, "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." This is explained by the apostle himself, of "standing before the judgment-seat of Christ," Romans 14:10-11. So he who was judged and condemned of men, shall be the Judge of men and angels.

2. Jesus Christ the Judge, descending from heaven into the air. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, "He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," Matthew 24:30. This his coming will be a mighty surprise to the world, which will be found in deep security; foolish virgins sleeping, and the wise slumbering. There will then be much luxury and debauchery in the world, little sobriety and watchfulness; a great throng of business, but a great scarcity of faith and holiness. "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30 The coming of the Judge will surprise some at markets, buying and selling; others at table, eating and drinking, and making merry; others busy with their new plantings; some building new houses; nay, the wedding-day of some will be their own and the world's judgment-day. But the Judge comes! the markets are marred; the buyer throws away what he has bought; the seller casts down his money; they are raised from the table, and their mirth is extinguished in a moment; though the tree be set in the earth, the gardener cannot stay to cast the earth about it; the workmen throw away their tools, when the house is half built, and the owner regards it no more; the bridegroom, bride, and guests, must leave the wedding day, and appear before the tribunal; for, "Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Revelation 1:7.

He shall come most gloriously; for he will "come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark 8:38. When he came in the flesh, to die for sinners, he laid aside the robes of his glory, and was despised and rejected of men: but when he comes again, to judge the world, such shall be his visible glory and majesty, that it shall cast an eternal veil over all earthy glory, and fill his greatest enemies with fear and dread. Never had prince and potentate in the world such a glorious train, as will accompany this Judge: all the holy angels shall come with him, for his honor and service. Then He, who was led to the cross with a band of soldiers, will be gloriously attended to the place of judgment, by not a multitude of the heavenly angels, but by "all his holy angels," says the text.

3. At the coming of the Judge, the summons is given to the parties by the sound of the last trumpet; at which the dead are raised, and those found alive are changed; see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. O loud trumpet, that shall be heard at once, in all corners of the earth, and of the sea! O wonderful voice, that will not only disturb those who sleep in the dust, but effectually awaken, rouse them out of their sleep, and raise them from death! Were trumpets sounding now, drums beating, furious soldiers crying and killing men, women and children running and shrieking, the wounded groaning and dying; those who are in the graves would have no more disturbance than if the world were in most profound peace. Yes, were stormy winds casting down the lofty oaks, the seas roaring and swallowing up the ships, the most dreadful thunders going along the heavens, lightnings everywhere flashing, the earth quaking, trembling, opening, and swallowing up whole cities, and burying multitudes at once; the dead would still enjoy a perfect repose, and sleep soundly in the dust, though their own dust should be thrown out of its place. But at the sound of this trumpet, they shall all awake. The morning is come, they can sleep no longer; the time for the dead to be judged: they must get out of their graves, and appear before the Judge.

4. The Judge shall sit down on the tribunal; he shall sit on the throne of his glory. He stood before a tribunal on earth, and was condemned as a malefactor: now he shall sit on his own tribunal, and judge the world. He once hung upon the cross, covered with shame; now he shall sit on a throne of glory. What this throne shall be, whether a bright cloud, or what else, I shall not inquire. Our eyes shall answer to that question at length. John "saw a great white throne," Revelation 20:11. "His throne," says Daniel, "was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire," chap 7:9. Whatever it be, doubtless it will be a throne glorious beyond expression; and in comparison with which, the most glorious throne on the earth is but a seat on a dunghill; and the sight of it will equally surprise kings who sat on thrones in this life, and beggars who sat on dunghills. It will be a throne, for stateliness and glory, suited to the quality of him who shall sit on it. Never had a judge such a throne, and never had a throne such a judge on it.

Leaving the discovery of the nature of the throne until that day, it concerns us more nearly to consider what a JUDGE will sit on it; a point on which we are not left to uncertain conjectures. The Judge on the throne will be,

(1.) A Judge VISIBLE to our bodily eyes, Revelation 1:7, "Every eye shall see him." When God gave the law on mount Sinai, the people "saw no similitude, only heard a voice:" but when he calls the world to an account how they observed his law, the man Christ being Judge, we shall see our Judge with our eyes, either to our eternal comfort, or to our eternal confusion, according to the treatment which we give him now. That very body which was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, between two thieves, shall then be seen on the throne, shining in glory. We now see him symbolically, in the sacrament of his supper; the saints see him by the eye of faith; then all shall see him with those eyes now in their heads.

(2.) A Judge having full AUTHORITY and POWER to render unto everyone according to his works, Christ, as God, has authority of himself; and as Mediator he has a judicial power and authority, which his Father has invested him with, according to the covenant between the Father and the Son for the redemption of sinners. His divine glory will be light, by which all men shall see clearly to read his commission for this great and honorable employment. "All power is given to him in heaven and in earth," Matthew 28:18. He has "the keys of hell and of death," Revelation 1:18.

There can be no appeal from his tribunal: sentence once passed there, must stand forever; there is no reversing it. All appeals are from an inferior to a superior court: but when God gives sentence against a man, where can he find a higher court to bring his process to? This judgment is the Mediator's judgment, and therefore the last judgment. If the Intercessor is against us, who can be for us? If Christ condemns us, who will absolve us?

(3.) A Judge of infinite WISDOM. His eyes will pierce into, and clearly discern the most intricate cases. His omniscience qualifies him for judging the most retired thoughts, as well as the words and works. The most subtle sinner shall not be able to deceive him, nor, by any artful management, to palliate the crime. He is the searcher of hearts, to whom nothing can be hidden or perplexed; but all things are naked and open unto his eyes, Hebrews 4:13.

(4.) A most JUST Judge; a Judge of perfect integrity. He is the righteous Judge, 2 Timothy 4:8, and his throne a great white throne, Revelation 20:11, from whence no judgment shall proceed, but what is pure and spotless. The Thebans painted justice blind, and without hands; because judges ought not to respect people, nor take bribes. The Areopagites judged in the dark; that they might not regard who spoke, but what was spoken. With the Judge on his throne, there will be no respect of people; he will neither regard the rich, nor the poor: but just judgment shall go forth, in everyone's cause.

(5.) An OMNIPOTENT Judge, able to put his sentence in execution. The united force of devils and wicked men will be altogether unable to withstand him. They cannot retard the execution of the sentence against them one moment; far less can they stop it altogether. "Thousand thousands of angels minister unto him," Daniel 7:10. And, by the breath of his mouth, he can drive the cursed herd where he pleases.

5. The PARTIES shall appear. These are men and DEVILS. Although the fallen angels were, from the first moment of their sinning, subjected to the wrath of God, and were cast down to hell, and wherever they go they carry their hell about with them; yet it is evident that they are reserved unto judgment, 2 Peter 2:4, namely, unto the judgment of the great day, Jude, verse 6. Then they shall be solemnly and publicly judged, 1 Corinthians 6:3, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" At that day they shall answer for their trade of sinning, and tempting to sin, which they have been carrying on from the beginning. And they shall receive the due reward of all the dishonor which they have done to God, and of all the mischief which they have done to men. Those wicked spirits now in chains, though not in such strait custody, but that they go about, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, shall then receive their final sentence, and be shut up in their den, in the prison; where they shall be held in extreme and unspeakable torment, through all eternity, Revelation 20:10, "And the devil who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." In prospect of which, the devils said to Christ, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Matthew 8:29. But what we are chiefly concerned to take notice of, is the case of MEN at that day. All men must appear before this tribunal. All of each gender, of every age, quality, and condition; the great and small, noble and ignoble; none are excepted. Adam and Eve, with all their sons and daughters, everyone who has had - or, to the end of the world, shall have - a living soul united to a body, will make up this great congregation. Even those who refused to come to the throne of grace, shall be forced to the bar of justice: for there can be no hiding from the all-seeing

Judge, no flying from him who is present everywhere, no resisting of him who is armed with almighty power, "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:10. "Before him shall be gathered all nations," says the text. This is to be done by the ministry of angels. By them shall the elect be gathered, Mark 13:27, "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds." And they also shall gather the reprobate, "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:40-42. From all corners of the world shall the inhabitants thereof be gathered unto the place where he shall set his throne for judgment.

6. There shall be a SEPARATION made between the righteous and the wicked; the elect sheep being set on Christ's right hand, and the reprobate goats on his left. There is no necessity to wait for this separation, until the trial is over; since the parties will rise out of their graves with plain outward marks of distinction, as was mentioned before. The separation seems to be effected by that double gathering, before mentioned; the one of the elect, Mark 13:2, the other of those who do iniquity, Matthew 13:41. The elect being "caught up together in the clouds, meet the Lord in the air," 1 Thessalonians 4:17, and so are set on his right hand; and the reprobate left on the earth, are placed upon the Judge's left hand.

Here is now a total separation of two parties, who were always opposite to each other in their principles, aims, and manner of life; who, when together, were a burden the one to the other, under which the one groaned, and the other raged: but now they are finally parted, never to come together any more. The righteous and wicked, like the iron and clay, which could never mix (see Daniel 2:41-43), are quite separated: the one being drawn up into the air, by the attractive virtue of "the stone cut out of the mountain," namely, Jesus Christ; and the other left upon its earth, to be trod under foot.

Now let us look to the elect sheep on the right hand, and there we shall see a glorious company of saints shining, as so many stars in their orbs; and with a cheerful countenance beholding Him who sits upon the throne. Here will be two wonderful sights, which the world never saw.

(1.) A great congregation of saints, in which there will not be so much as one hypocrite. There was a bloody Cain in Adam's family; a cursed Ham in Noah's family, in the ark; a treacherous Judas in Christ's own family: but in that company there will be none but sealed ones, members of Christ, having all one Father. This is a sight reserved for that day.

(2.) All the godly upon one side. Seldom or never do the saints on earth make such harmony, but there are some jarring strings among them. It is not to be expected, that men who see but in part, though they are all going to one city, should agree as to every step in the way: no, we must not look for it, in this state of imperfection. But at that day, Paul and Barnabas shall meet in peace and unity, though once "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, the one from the other," Acts 15:39. There shall be no more divisions, no more separate standing among those who belonged to Christ. All the godly, of the different parties, shall then be upon one side; seeing, whatever were their differences in lesser things, while in the world, yet even then they met and concerted all in one Lord Jesus Christ, by a true and lively faith, and in the one way of holiness, or practical godliness. And vile hypocrites, of whatever party, shall be led forth with the

workers of iniquity.

Look to left hand, and there you will see the cursed goats, all the wicked ones, from Cain to the last ungodly person who shall be in the world, gathered together into one most miserable congregation. There are many assemblies of the wicked now; then there shall be but one. But all of them shall be present there, brought together, as one herd for the slaughter, bellowing and roaring, weeping and howling, for the miseries come, and that are coming on them. And remember, you shall not be a mere spectator, to look at these two such different companies; but must yourself take your place in one of the two, and shall share with the company, whatever hand it be on. Those who now abhor no society so much as that of the saints, would then be glad to be allowed to get in among them, though it were but to lie at their feet. But then not one tare shall be found with the wheat; He will thoroughly purge his floor. Many of the right-hand men of this world, will be left-hand men in that day. Many, who must have the door on the right hand of those who are better than they, if the righteous be more excellent than his neighbor, shall then be turned to the left hand, as most despicable wretches!

O, how terrible will this separation be to the ungodly! How dreadful will this gathering them together into one company be! What they will not believe, they will then see, namely, that but few are saved. They think it enough now to be neighbor-like, and can securely follow the multitude: but the multitude on the left hand will yield them no comfort. How will it sting the ungodly church-goer, to see himself set on the same hand with Turks and Pagans! How will it gall profane Protestants, to stand with idolatrous Papists; praying people, with their profane neighbors, who mocked at religious exercises; formal professors, strangers to the new birth and the power of godliness, with persecutors! Now there are many opposite societies in the world; but then all the ungodly shall be in one society. And how dreadful will the faces of companions in sin be to one another there! What doleful shrieks, when the drunkards, who have had many a jovial day together, shall see one another face to face; when the husband and wife, the parents and children, masters and servants, and neighbors, who have been snares and stumbling-blocks to one another, to the ruin of their own souls and those of their relatives, shall meet again in that miserable society! Then there will be curses instead of greetings; and tearing of themselves, and raging against one another, instead of their usual embraces.

7. The parties shall be tried. The trial cannot be difficult, seeing the Judge is omniscient, and nothing can be hidden from him. But, that his righteous judgment may be made evident to all, he will set the hidden things of darkness in the clearest light at that trial, 1 Corinthians 4:5. Men shall be tried,

(1.) Upon their WORKS; for "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Ecclesiastes 12:14. The Judge will try every man’s life, and set his deeds done in the body, with all the circumstances thereof, in a true light. Then will many actions, commended and applauded of men, as good and just, be discovered to have been evil and abominable in the sight of God; and many works, now condemned by the world, will be approved and commended by the great Judge, as good and just. Secret things will be brought to light; and what was hidden from the view of the world, shall be laid open. Wickedness, which has been kept hidden and secret, in spite of all human search, will then be brought forth to the glory of God, and the confusion of impenitent sinners, who hid it. The world appears now very vile in the

eyes of those who are exercised to godliness; and it will then appear a thousand times more vile, when that which is done of men in secret comes to be discovered. Every good action shall then be remembered; and the hidden piety and good works, most industriously concealed by the saints from the eyes of men, shall no more lie hidden: for though the Lord will not allow men to proclaim everyone his own goodness, yet he himself will do it in due time.

(2.) Their WORDS shall be judged, Matthew 12:37, "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." Not a word spoken for God and his cause in the world, from love to himself, shall be forgotten. They are all kept in remembrance, and shall be brought forth as evidences of faith, and of an interest in Christ. Malachi 3:16-17, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him. And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." The tongue, which did run at random, shall then confess to God; and the speaker shall find it to have been followed, and every word noted which dropped from the unsanctified lips. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matthew 12:36. And if they shall give account of idle words, that is, words spoken to no good purpose, neither for God's glory, nor their own nor their neighbor's good; how much more shall men's wicked words, their sinful oaths, curses, lies, filthy communications, and bitter words, be called over again in that day! The tongues of many shall then fall upon themselves, and ruin them.

(3.) Men's THOUGHTS shall be brought into judgment: the Judge will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, 1 Corinthians 4:5. Thoughts go free from man's judgment, but not from the judgment of the heart-searching God, who knows men's thoughts, without the help of signs to discern them by. The secret springs of men's actions will then be brought to light; and the sins, which never came further than the heart, will then be laid open. O, what a picture will man's corrupt nature present, when his inmost thoughts are revealed, and all his speculative impurities are exposed! The rottenness that is within many a whited sepulcher, the speculative filthiness and wantonness, murder and malignity, now lurking in the hearts of men, as in the chambers of imagery, will then be revealed, and what good was in the hearts of any shall no more lie concealed. If it was in their hearts to build a house to the Lord, they shall hear, that they did well that it was in their heart. This TRIAL will be righteous and impartial, accurate and searching, clear and evident. The Judge is the righteous Judge, and he will do right to everyone. He has a just balance for good and evil actions, and for honest and false hearts. The fig-leaf cover of hypocrisy will then be blown aside, and the hypocrite's nakedness will appear; as when the Lord came to judge Adam and Eve "in the cool," or, as the word is, "in the wind of the day," Genesis 3:8. "The fire," which tries things most exquisitely, "shall try every man's work, of what sort it is," 1 Corinthians 3:13. Man's judgment is often perplexed and confused: but here the whole process shall be clear and evident, as written with a sunbeam. It shall be clear to the Judge, to whom no case can be intricate; to the parties, who shall be convinced, Jude 1:15. And the multitudes on both sides shall see that the Judge is clear when he judges; for then "the heavens shall declare his righteousness," in the audience of all the world; and so it shall be universally known, Psalms 50:6. On these accounts it is, that this trial is held out in the Scripture, under the notion of "opening of books;" and men are said to be "judged out of those things written in the books," Revelation 20:12. The judge of the world, who infallibly knows all things, has no need of books to be laid before him, to prevent mistakes in any point of

law or fact; but the expression points at his proceedings as most clear, accurate, just and well grounded, in every step of them. Now, there are FOUR BOOKS that shall be opened in that day.

(1.) The book of God's remembrance, or omniscience, Malachi 3:16. This is an exact record of every man's state, thoughts, words, and deeds, good or evil: it is, as it were, a ledger, in which the Lord puts down all that passes in men's hearts, lips, and lives; and it is a reckoning up every day that one lives. In it are recorded men's sins and good works, secret and open, with all their circumstances. Here are registered all their privileges, temporal and spiritual mercies, often made ready to their hand; the checks, admonitions, and rebukes, given by teachers, neighbors, afflictions, and men's own consciences; everything in its due order. This book will serve only as a bill of indictment, in respect of the ungodly; but it will be for another use in respect of the godly, namely, for a memorial of their good. The opening of it is the Judge's bringing to light what is written in it; the reading, as it were, of the bill and memorial, respectively, in their hearing.

(2.) The book of CONSCIENCE will be opened, which shall be as a thousand witnesses to prove the fact, Romans 2:15, "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." Conscience is a censor going with every man wherever he goes, taking an account of his deeds done in the body, and, as it were, noting them in a book. Much is written in it, which cannot be read now; the writing of conscience being, in many cases, like to that which is made with the juice of lemons, not to be read until it is held before the fire; but then men shall read it clearly and distinctly: the fire which is to try every man's work, will make the book of conscience legible in every point.

Though the book be sealed now, the conscience blind, dumb, and deaf, the seals will then be broken, and the book opened. There shall be no more a silent conscience, and far less a seared conscience, among all the ungodly crew: but their conscience shall be most quick-sighted, and most lively, in that day. None shall then call good evil, or evil good. Ignorance of what sin is, and what things are sins, will have no place among them: and the subtle reasonings of men, in favor of their lusts, will then be forever baffled by their own conscience. None shall have the favor, if I may so speak, of lying under the soft cover of delusion; but they shall all be convicted by their conscience. Whether they will or not, they must look on this book, read, be confounded, and stand speechless, knowing that nothing is charged upon them by mistake; since this is a book which was always in their own custody. Thus shall the Judge make every man see himself in the mirror of his own conscience, which will make quick work.

(3.) The book of the LAW shall be opened. This book is the standard and rule, by which is known what is right, and what is wrong; as also, what sentence is to be passed accordingly, on those who are under it. As to the opening of this book, in a statute, which shows what is sin, and what is duty; it agrees with the opening of the book of conscience. For conscience is set, by the sovereign lawgiver, in every man's bosom, to be his private teacher, to show him the law; and his private pastor, to make application of the same: and at that day, it will be perfectly fit for its office; so that the conscience, which is most stupid now, shall then read to the man most accurate, but dreadful lectures on the law. But what seems principally pointed at by the opening of this book, is the opening of that part of it which determines the reward of men's works. Now the law promises life, upon perfect obedience: but none can be found on the right hand, or on the left, who will pretend to that, when once the book of conscience is opened. It threatens death upon disobedience, and

will effectually bring it upon all under its dominion. And this part of the book of the law, determining the reward of men’s works, is opened, only to show what must be the portion of the ungodly, and that there they may read their sentence, before it is pronounced. But it is not opened for the sentence of the saints; for no sentence absolving a sinner could ever be drawn out of it. The law promises life, not as it is a rule of actions, but as a covenant of works; therefore, innocent man could not have demanded life upon his obedience, until the law was reduced into the form of a covenant; as was shown before. But the saints, having been, in this life, brought under a new covenant, namely, the covenant of grace, were dead to the law as a covenant of works, and it was dead to them. Therefore, as they shall not now have any fear of death from it; so they can have no hope of life from it, since "they are not under the law, but under grace," Romans 6:14. But, for their sentence, "another book is opened."

Thus the book of the law is opened, for the sentence against all those on the left hand: and by it they will clearly see the justice of the judgment against them, and how the Judge proceeds therein according to law. Nevertheless, there will be this difference, namely, that those who had only the natural law, and lived not under any special revelation, shall be judged by that law of nature they had in their hearts; which law declares "that they which commit such things," as they will stand convicted of, "are worthy of death," Romans 1:32. But those who had the written law, to whom the word of God came, sounding in the visible church, shall be judged by that written law. So says the apostle, Romans 2:12, "For as many as have sinned without" the written "law, shall also perish without" the written "law: and as many as have sinned in the law," that is, under the written law, "shall also be judged by the" written "law."

(4.) "Another book" shall be "opened, which is the book of LIFE," Revelation 20:12. In this the names of all the elect are written, as Christ said to his disciples, Luke 10:20, "Your names are written in heaven." This book contains God’s gracious and unchangeable purpose, to bring all the elect to eternal life; and that, in order thereto, they be redeemed by the blood of his Son, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and raised up by him at the last day without sin. It is now lodged in the Mediator’s hand, as the book of "the manner of the kingdom:" and having perfected the work the Father gave him to do, he shall, on the great day, produce and open the book, and present the people therein named, "faultless before the presence of his glory," Jude 1:24; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Ephesians 5:27. Not one of those who are named in the book will be missing. They shall be found qualified according to the order of the book, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, raised up, without spot: what remains then, but, according to the same book, they obtain the great end, namely, everlasting life? This may be gathered from that precious promise, Revelation 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment," being raised in glory; "and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father:" it shall be, as it were, read out, among the rest of God’s elect, "and before his angels." Here is now the ground of the saints’ absolution, the ground of the blessed sentence they shall receive. The book of life being opened, it will be known to all, who are elected, and who are not. Thus far of the trial of the parties.

8. Then shall the Judge pronounce this blessed sentence on the saints, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matthew 25:34. It is most probable, the man Christ will pronounce it with an audible voice: which not only all the saints, but all the wicked likewise, shall hear and understand. Who can conceive the inexpressible joy,

with which these happy ones will hear these words? Who can imagine that fullness of joy, which will be poured into their hearts, with these words reaching their ears? And who can conceive how much of hell shall break forth into the hearts of all the ungodly crew, by these words of heaven? It is certain that this sentence shall be pronounced, before the sentence of damnation. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed," etc., Matthew 25:34. "Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed," etc., Matthew 25:41. There is no need of this order, that the saints may, without fear, hear the other sentence on the reprobate: they who are raised in glory, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, presented without spot, and whose souls, for the far greater part of them, have been so long in heaven before, shall not be capable of any such fear. But hereby they will be brought in orderly, to sit in judgment, as Christ's assessors, against the ungodly; whose torment will be aggravated by it. It will he a hell to them to be kept out of hell, until they see the doors of heaven opened to receive the saints, who once dwelt in the same world with them; and perhaps in the same parish, country, or town, and sat under the same ministry with themselves. Thus will they see heaven afar off, to make their hell the hotter: like that unbelieving master, 2 Kings 7:19-20, they "shall see" the plenty "with their eyes, but shall not eat thereof." Every word of the blessed sentence shall be like an envenomed arrow shot into their hearts while they see what they have lost, and from thence gather what they are to expect. This sentence passes on the saints, "according to their works," Revelation 20:12; but not for their works, nor for their faith, as if eternal life were merited by them. The sentence itself overthrows this absurd conceit. The kingdom which they are called to, was "prepared for them, from the foundation of the world;" not left to be merited by themselves, who were but of yesterday. They inherit it as sons, but procure it not to themselves as servants do the reward of their work. They were redeemed by the blood of Christ, and clothed with his spotless righteousness, which is the proper cause of the sentence. They were also qualified for heaven, by the sanctification of his Spirit; and hence it is "according to their works:" so that the ungodly world shall see now, that the Judge of the living and dead does good to those who were good. Therefore, it is added to the sentence, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me," Matthew 25:35-36; which does not denote the ground, but the evidence of their right to heaven: as if a judge should say, he absolves a man pursued for debt, for the witnesses depose that it is paid already. So the apostle says, 1 Corinthians 10:5, "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Their overthrow in the wilderness was not the ground of God's displeasure with them, but it was an evidence of it. And thus our Lord teaches us the necessary connection between glory and good works, namely, works evangelically good; works having a respect to Jesus Christ, and done out of faith in him, and love to him, without which they will not be regarded in that day. And the saints will so far be judged according to such works, that the degrees of glory among them shall be according to these works. For it is an eternal truth, "He who sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly," 2 Corinthians 9:6.

Thus shall the good works of the godly have a glorious, but a gratuitous reward; a reward of grace, not of debt; which will fill them with wonder at the riches of free grace, and at the Lord's condescending to take any notice, especially such public notice, of their poor worthless works: which seems to be the import of what they are said to answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and

invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" Matthew 25:37-39.

They will be amazed to see themselves set down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and to hear him acknowledge a little food or drink, such as they had, which they gave to a hungry member of Christ, for his sake! O, plentiful harvest, following upon the seed of good works! Rivers of pleasures, in exchange for a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple! Eternal mansions of glory, in exchange for a night's lodging given to a saint, who was a stranger! Everlasting robes of glory, in exchange for a new coat, or, it may be, an old one, bestowed on some saint, who had not necessary clothing! A visit to the sick saint, repaid by Christ himself, coming in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels! A visit made to a poor prisoner for the cause of Christ, repaid with a visit from the Judge of all, taking away the visitant with him to the palace of heaven, there to be forever with himself! These things will be matter of everlasting amazement; and should stir up all to sow liberally in time, while seed-time of good works lasts. But it is Christ's stamp on good works, that puts a value on them, in the eye of our gracious God; which seems to be the import of our Lord's reply, Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

9. Now the saints having received their own sentence, "they shall judge the world," 1 Corinthians 6:2. This was not fulfilled, when the empire became Christian, and Christians were made magistrates. No, the psalmist tells us, "This honor have all the saints," Psalms 149:9. And the apostle in the forecited place, adds, "And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" 1 Corinthians 6:3, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" Being called, they come to receive their kingdom, in the view of angels and men: they go, as it were—from the bar to the throne, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me in my throne," Revelation 3:21. They shall not judge the world, in Christ their head, by way of communion with him, by their works compared with those of the ungodly, or by way of testimony against them; but they shall be assessors to Jesus Christ the Judge, giving their voice against them, consenting to his judgment as just, and saying Amen to the doom pronounced against all the ungodly: as is said of the saints, upon the judgment of the great whore, Revelation 19:1-2, "Hallelujah - for true and righteous are his judgments." Thus, the upright shall have dominion over them, in the morning," of the resurrection, Psalms 49:14. Then, and not until then, shall that be fully accomplished, "May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord." Psalms 149:6-9

O! what a strange turn of affairs will appear here! What an astonishing sight will it be, to see wicked men, formerly their unjust judges, standing as criminals before the saints, whom formerly they condemned as heretics, rebels, and traitors! To see men of riches and power stand pale-faced, before those whom they oppressed! To see the mocker stand trembling before those whom he mocked! the worldly wise man, before those whom he accounted fools! Then shall the despised faces of the saints be dreadful faces to the wicked; and those, who sometimes were the song of the drunkards, shall then be a terror to them. All wrongs must be righted at length, and everyone set in his proper place.

10. The Judge will pronounce the sentence of damnation on all the ungodly multitude. "Then He will also say to those on the left—Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!" Matthew 25:41. Fearful doom! and that from the same mouth from whence proceeded the sentence of absolution before. It was an aggravation of the misery of the Jews, when their city was destroyed, that they were ruined by one who was accounted the darling of the world. O, what an aggravation of the misery of the wicked will it be also, that Christ will pronounce this sentence! To hear the curse from mount Zion, must needs be most terrible. To be condemned by him who came to save sinners, must be double damnation But thus it will be. The Lamb of God shall roar, as a lion, against them: he shall excommunicate, and cast them out of his presence forever, by a sentence from the throne, saying, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed." He shall adjudge them to everlasting fire, and the society of devils for evermore. And this sentence also, we suppose, will be pronounced with an audible voice, by the man Christ. And all the saints shall say, "Hallelujah, for true and righteous are his judgments!" None were so compassionate as the saints when on earth, during the time of God’s patience. But now that time is at an end: their compassion for the ungodly is swallowed in joy in the Mediator’s glory, and his executing just judgment, by which his enemies are made his footstool. Though, when on earth, the righteous man wept in secret places for their pride, and because they would not hear; yet "The righteous will rejoice when he sees the retribution; he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." Psalms 58:10. No pity shall then be shown them from their nearest relations. The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the Judge, in the condemnation of her ungodly husband! The godly husband shall say Amen! to the condemnation of her who lay in his bosom. The godly parents shall say Hallelujah! at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child. And the godly child shall, from the bottom of his heart, approve the condemnation of his wicked parents, the father who begat him, and the mother who bore him. The sentence is just; they are judged "according to their works," Revelation 20:12. "And again they shouted: Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." Revelation 19:3 "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns!" Revelation 19:6

There is no wrong done to them, "For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you didn’t take Me in; I was naked and you didn’t clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn’t take care of Me." Matthew 25:42-43. These are not only evidences of their ungodly and cursed state, but most proper grounds of their condemnation: for though good works do not merit salvation, yet evil works merit damnation. Sins of one kind only, namely, of omission, are here mentioned; not that these alone shall be then discovered, for the books lay all open: but because these, though there were no more, are sufficient to condemn unpardoned sinners. And if men are condemned for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission. The omission of works of charity and mercy, is mentioned in particular, to stop the mouths of the wicked; for it is most just that he "have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy," James 2:13. Taking notice of the omission of acts of charity and mercy towards the distressed members of Christ, intimates, that it is the judgment of those who have heard of Christ in the gospel, that is principally intended in this portion of Scripture; and that the slighting of Christ will be the great cause of the ruin of those who hear the gospel: but the enmity of the hearts of the wicked against Christ himself, is discovered by the treatment they now give to his members. In vain will they say, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a

stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?" Matthew 25:44. For the Lord reckons, and will reckon, the world's unkindness to his people, unkindness to himself; "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me," Matthew 25:45. Food and drink unhappily spared, when a member of Christ was in need of it! O, wretched neglect, that the stranger saint was not taken in! It had been better for them if they had left their own room, and their own bed, than that he lacked lodging.

O, cursed clothing, may the wicked say, that was in my house, locked up in my chest, or hanging in my wardrobe, and was not brought out to clothe such a one! O, that I had stripped myself, rather than he had gone away without clothing! Cursed business that diverted me from visiting such a saint! O, that I had rather watched whole nights with him! Wretch that I was! Why did I sit at ease in my house, when he was in prison, and did not visit him? But now the tables are turned: Christ's servants shall eat—but I shall be hungry; his servants shall drink—but I shall be thirsty; they rejoice—but I am ashamed, Isaiah 65:13. They are taken in—but I am cast out, and bid to depart; they are clothed with robes of glory—but I "walk naked, and they see my shame," Revelation 16:15. They are now raised up on high, beyond the reach of sickness or pain—but I must now "lie down in sorrow," Isaiah 50:11. Now they will go to the palace of heaven—but I must go to the prison of hell. But if our Lord thus resents men's neglecting to help his people under these, and the like distresses; what may they expect who are the authors and instruments of them? If they shall be fed with wrath, who fed them not when they were hungry; what shall become of those, who robbed and took advantage of them? What a full cup of wrath shall be the portion of those, who were so far from giving them food or drink when hungry or thirsty, that they made it a crime for others to entertain them, and made themselves drunken with their blood! They must lodge with devils for evermore, who took not in the Lord's people, when strangers: then, what a lodging shall those have, who drove them out of their own houses, out of their native land, and made them strangers! Men will be condemned for not clothing them, when naked: then, how heavy must the sentence of those be, who have stripped them, and made them go without clothing! Surely, if not visiting them in sickness, or in prison, shall be so severely punished; those shall not escape a most heavy doom, who have cast them into prisons, and have put them under such hardships, as have impaired their health, brought sickness on them, and cut short their days in prison, or out of prison. To put a face upon such wicked practices, men will pretend to retain an honor for Christ and religion, while they thus treat his members, walking in his way, and keeping the truth. They are here represented to say, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?" Matthew 25:44. As if they should say, Our bread, drink, lodging, clothing, and visits, were indeed refused, but not to Christ; but to a set of men of a bad character, men who "turned the world upside down," Acts 17:6; who troubled Israel, 1 Kings 18:7; a strange and fanatic sort of people, having laws diverse from all people, factious and rebellious; they did not keep the king's laws, and were therefore a dangerous set of men; it was not for the king's profit to tolerate them, Esther 3:8. But although men cast iniquity upon the godly, and give them evil names, that they may treat them as criminals, all these pretenses will avail them nothing, in the great day, before the righteous Judge, nor before their own consciences; but the real ground of their enmity against the saints will be found, to their own conviction, to be their enmity against Christ himself. This seems to be the import of the objection of the damned, Matthew 25:44, and of the answer to it, Matthew 25:45, "'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

11. Sentence being passed on both parties, the full execution of the same follows, Matthew 25:46, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." The condemned shall get no reprieve, but go to their place without delay; they shall be driven away from the judgment-seat into hell: and the saints "shall enter into the King’s palace," Psalms 45:15, namely, into heaven, the seat of the blessed. But our Lord Christ, and his glorious company, shall keep the field that day and see the backs of all their enemies; for the condemned go off first. In this day of the Lord, the great day, shall be the general conflagration; by which these visible heavens, the earth, and sea, shall pass away. Not that they shall be annihilated, or reduced to nothing, that is not the operation of fire; but they shall be purified by that fire, from all the effects of sin, and of the curse, upon them; and then renewed, and made more glorious and stable. Of this conflagration, the apostle Peter speaks, 2 Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." See also 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:12. And of the renewing of the world, he adds, 2 Peter 3:13, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness."

It seems most agreeable to the Scriptures, and to the nature of the thing, to conceive this conflagration to follow after the general judgment; sentence being passed on both parties before it. And I think it probable, that it will fall in with the putting of the sentence in execution against the damned; so as they shall, according to their sentence, depart, and the heavens and the earth pass away, together and at once, at that furious rebuke from the throne, driving them away, out of the world (in this fire) to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Even as, in the deluge, with which the apostle Peter compares the conflagration, or burning of the world, 2 Peter 3:6-7, the world itself, and the wicked upon it, perished together; the same water which destroyed the earth, sweeping away the inhabitants. For it is not likely that the wicked shall at all stand on the new earth, "wherein dwells righteousness," 2 Peter 3:13. And as for this earth, it shall "flee away," which seems to denote a very quick dispatch, and it shall "flee from his face, who sits on the throne," Revelation 20:11, "And I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." The execution of the sentence on the wicked is also thus expressed; they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence," or "from the face of the Lord," 2 Thessalonians 1:9. The original word is the same in both texts, which, being compared, seem to say, that these creatures, abused by the wicked, being left to stand as witnesses against them in the judgment, are, after sentence passed on their abusers, made to pass away with them from the face of the Judge. It is true, the fleeing away of the earth and the heavens is narrated, Revelation 20:11, before the judgment; but that does not prove its going before the judgment, any more than the narrating of the judgment, Revelation 20:12, before the resurrection, Revelation 20:13, will prove the judgment to be before it.

Further, it is remarkable, in the execution of the sentence, Revelation 20:14-15, that not only the reprobate are "cast into the lake," but "death and hell" are cast into it likewise: all effects of sin and of the curse are removed out of the world, for which very cause shall the conflagration be, and they are confined to the place of the damned.

Besides all this, it is evident that the end of the world is by the conflagration: and the apostle tells us, 1 Corinthians 15:24-25, "Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he

must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." Which last, as it must be done before the end, so it seems not to be done, but by putting the sentence in execution, passed in the day of judgment, against the wicked.

Now, if the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is set forth for an example, Jude 1:7, was so dreadful, how terrible will that day be, when the whole world shall be at once in flames! How will wretched worldlings look, when their darling world shall be all on fire! Then shall strong castles and towering palaces, with all their rich furniture, go up together in one flame with the poorest cottages. What heart can fully conceive the terror of that day to the wicked, when the whole fabric of heaven and earth shall at once be dissolved by that fire? when that miserable company shall be driven from the tribunal—to the pit, with fire within them, and outside of them on every hand; and fire awaiting them in the lake; where this fire, may also follow them. As for the particular PLACE of this judgment, though some point us to the valley of Jehoshaphat for it; yet our Lord, who infallibly knew it, being asked the question by his disciples, "Where, Lord?" only said, "Wherever the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together," Luke 17:37. After which answer, it is too much for men to renew the question. As for the TIME, when it shall be, in vain do men search for what the Lord has purposely kept secret, Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power." The apostle Paul, after having very plainly described the second coming of Christ, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, adds, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you: for yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." Nevertheless, some, in several ages, have made very bold with the time; and several particular years, which are now past, have been given out to the world, for the time of the end, by men who have pried into the secrets of God. Time has proclaimed to the world, their rashness and folly; and it is probable they will be no more happy in their conjectures, whose determinate time is yet to come. Let us rest in that, "He will come."

God has kept the day hidden from us, that we may be every day ready for it, Matthew 25:13, "Watch, therefore; for you know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man comes." And let us remember, that the last day of our life, will determine our state in the last day of the world. As we die—so shall we be judged.

01.04d The General Judgment cont'd

III. The APPLICATION of this great truth—that there shall be a general judgment. I shall now conclude this subject, with some application of what has been said.

Use 1. Of comfort to all the SAINTS. Here is abundance of consolation to all who are in the state of grace. Whatever be your afflictions in the world, this day will make up all your losses. "Though you have lain among the pots; yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," Psalms 68:13. Though the world reproaches, judges, and condemns you; the Judge will at that day absolve you, and bring forth your righteousness as the light. The world's fools will then appear to have been the only wise men who were in it. Though the cross be heavy, you may well bear it, in expectation of the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will then give you. If the world despises you, and treats you with the utmost contempt, regard it not: the day is coming wherein you shall sit with Christ on his throne. Be not discouraged by reason of manifold temptations. But resist the devil in confidence of a full and complete victory; for you shall judge the tempter at last. Though you have hard wrestling now with the body of sin and death; yet you shall get all your enemies under your feet at length, and be presented faultless before the presence of his glory. Let not the terror of that day dispirit you, when you think upon it; let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him, and to the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads, when they think of his coming: but lift you up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer, and your Advocate. You must appear before the judgment-seat, but you "shall not come into condemnation," John 5:24. His coming will not be against you—but for you. He came in the flesh, to remove the lawful impediments of the spiritual marriage, by his death; he came in the gospel to you, to espouse you to himself; he will come, at last, to solemnize the marriage, and take the bride home to his Father's house. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Use 2. Of terror to all UNBELIEVERS. This may serve to awaken a secure generation, a world lying in wickedness, as if they were never to be called to an account for it; and slighting the Mediator, as if he were not to judge them. Ah! how few have lively impressions of the judgment to come! Most men live as if what is said of it from the word of God, were but idle tales. The profane lives of many speak the thoughts of it to be far from their hearts, and in very deed make a mock of it before the world, saying, in effect, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The hypocrisy of others, who blind the eyes of the world with being a splendid profession, being in appearance Christ's sheep, while they are indeed the devil's goats, proves that the great separation of the sheep from the goats is very little laid to heart. How do many indulge themselves in secret wickedness, of which they would be ashamed before witnesses; not considering, that their most secret thoughts and actions will, at that day, be revealed before the great congregation!

How eagerly are men's hearts set on the world—as if it were to be their everlasting habitation! The solemn assemblies, and public ordinances, wherein the Judge is upon a transaction of peace with the criminals, are undervalued: many hearts swim like feathers in the waters of the sanctuary, that

sink like stones to the bottom in cares of this life; they will be very serious in trifles of this world, and trifle in the most serious and weighty things of another world. But, O, consider the day that is approaching, in which Christ will come to judgment! the world shall be summoned, by the sound of the last trumpet, to appear before his tribunal. The Judge will sit on his throne, and all nations will be summoned before him; the separation will be made between the godly and the wicked; the books opened, and the dead judged out of them; one party will be adjudged to everlasting life, and the other to everlasting fire, according to their works.

It would be a sight, of admirable curiosity, if you could wrap up yourself in some dark cloud, or hide yourself in the cleft of some high rock, from whence you might espy wicked kings, princes, judges, and great ones of the earth, rising out of their marble tombs, and brought to the bar, to answer for all their cruelty, injustice, oppression, profanity, without any marks of distinction, but what their wickedness puts upon them. Profane, unholy, and unfaithful ministers, pursued with the curses of their ruined people, from their graves to the judgment seat, and charged with the blood of souls, to whom they gave not faithful warning. Mighty men standing trembling before the Judge, unable to recover their usual boldness, to outwit him with their subtleties, or defend themselves by their strength. Delicate women cast forth of their graves, as abominable branches, dragged to the tribunal, to answer for their ungodly lives. The ignorant, suddenly taught in the law to their cost; and the learned declared before the world, to be fools and laborious triflers. The atheist convinced, the hypocrite unmasked, and the profane at length turned serious about his eternal state. Secret murders, adulteries, thefts, cheats, and other works of darkness, which defied all human search, discovered and laid open before the world, with their most minute circumstances. No special regard given to the rich, no pity shown to the poor. The scales of the world turned; oppressed and despised piety set on high, and prosperous wickedness at last brought low. All not found in Christ, arraigned, convicted, and condemned, without respect of persons, and driven from the tribunal to the bottomless pit; while those found in him, at that day, being absolved before the world, go with him into heaven. Nay, but you can not so escape. Whoever you are, not being in Christ, you must bear a part in this tragic and alarming scene!

Sinner, that same Lord Christ, whom you now despise, whom you wound through the sides of his messengers, and before whom you do prefer your lusts—will be your Judge. The neglected Savior will be a severe Judge. O! what mountain, what rock, will you get to fall on you—to hide you from the face of Him who sits on the throne? You have now a rock within you, a heart of adamant, so that you can count the darts of the word as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear: but that rock will rend at the sight of the Judge; that hard heart will then break, and you will weep and wail, when weeping and waiting will be to no purpose. Death’s bands will fall off, the grave will cast you out; and the mountains shall skip from you, and the rocks refuse to grind you to powder. How will your cursed eyes abide the sight of the Judge? Behold, he comes! Where is the profane swearer, who tore his wounds? The wretched worldling, now abandoned of his God? The formal hypocrite, who kissed him and betrayed him? The despiser of the gospel, who sent him away in his messengers groaning, profaned his ordinances, and trampled under foot his precious blood? O murderer, the slain man is your Judge—it is he whom you did so maltreat. Behold the neglected Lamb of God appearing as a lion against you. How will your heart endure the darts of his fiery looks? That rocky heart, which now holds out against him, shall then be blown up; that face, which refuses to blush now, shall then gather blackness: arrows of wrath shall pierce where arrows of

conviction cannot enter now.

What will you answer him, when he rises up, and charges you with your unbelief and impenitence? Will you say, you were not warned? Conscience within you will give you the lie; the secret groans and weariness of those who warned you, will witness the contrary. If a child or a fool did tell you that your house was on fire, you would immediately run to quench it: but, in matters of eternal concern, men will first fill their hearts with prejudices against the messengers, and then cast their message behind their backs. But these silly excuses and pretenses will not avail in the day of the Lord. How will these cursed ears, now deaf to the call of the gospel, inviting sinners to come to Christ, hear the fearful sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" No sleepy hearer shall be there; no man’s heart will then wander; their hearts and eyes will then be fixed on their misery, which they will not now believe. O, that we knew, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace!

Lastly, Be exhorted to believe this great truth; and believe it so that you may prepare for the judgment. Set up a secret tribunal in your own breasts, and often call yourselves to an account there. Make the Judge your friend in time, by closing with him in the offer of the gospel; and give all diligence, that you may be found in Christ at that day. Cast off the works of darkness; and live, as believing you are, at all times, and in all places, under the eye of your Judge, who "will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Be fruitful in good works, knowing that as you sow, you shall reap. Study piety towards God, righteousness and charity towards men. Lay up in store plenty of works of charity and mercy towards those who are in distress, especially such as are of the household of faith; that they may be produced, at that day, as evidences that you belong to Christ. Shut not up your affections of mercy, now, towards the needy; lest you then find no mercy. Take heed, that in all your works you be single and sincere; aiming, in them all, at the glory of the Lord, a testimony of your love to him, and in obedience to his command. Leave it to hypocrites, who have their reward, to proclaim every man his own goodness; and to sound a trumpet when they do their alms. It is a base and unchristian spirit, which cannot have satisfaction in a good work unless it be exposed to the view of others: it is utterly unworthy of one who believes that the last trumpet shall call together the whole world, before whom the Judge himself shall publish works truly good, however secretly they were done. Live in a believing expectation of the coming of the Lord. Let your loins be always girt, and your lamps burning; so when he comes, whether in the last day of your life, or in the last day of the world, you shall be able to say with joy, "Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him."

01.04e Heaven

Human Nature in its Fourfold State Thomas Boston (1676 - 1732) The Kingdom of Heaven

"Then the King will say to those on His right—Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34

Having, from this portion of Scripture, which the text is a part of, discoursed of the general judgment; and being to speak of the everlasting happiness of the saints, and the everlasting misery of the wicked, from the respective sentences to be pronounced upon them in the great day, I shall take them in the order wherein they lie before us. The words of the text contain the joyful sentence itself, together with an historical introduction thereto, which gives us an account of the Judge pronouncing the sentence, "the King," Jesus Christ; the parties on whom it is given, "those on his right hand;" and the time when, "then," as soon as the trial is over. Of these I have spoken already. It is the sentence itself we are now to consider, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father," etc. Stand back, O you profane goats! away all unregenerate souls, not united to Jesus Christ! this is not for you. Come, O you saints, brought out of your natural state into the state of grace! behold here the state of glory awaiting you. Here is glory let down to us in words and syllables; a looking-glass, in which you may see your everlasting happiness; a picture of Christ's Father's house, wherein there are many mansions. This glorious sentence bears two things.

1. The complete happiness to which the saints are adjudged, "the kingdom."

2. Their solemn admission to it, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit," etc.

1. Their complete happiness is a kingdom. A kingdom is the top of worldly felicity; there is nothing on earth greater than a kingdom: therefore, the hidden weight of the glory in heaven is held forth to us under that notion. But it is not an ordinary kingdom, it is "the kingdom;" the kingdom of heaven, surpassing all the kingdoms of the earth in glory, honor, profit, and pleasure, infinitely more than they do in these excel the low and inglorious condition of a beggar in rags, and on a ash-heap.

2. There is a solemn admission of the saints into this their kingdom, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In view of angels, men, and devils, they are invested with royalty, and solemnly inaugurated before the whole world, by Jesus Christ, the heir of all things, who has "all power in heaven and in earth." Their right to the kingdom is solemnly recognized and owned. They are admitted to it as undoubted heirs of the kingdom, to possess it by inheritance. And because this kingdom is the Father's kingdom, therefore they are openly acknowledged, in their admission to it, to be the blessed of Christ's Father: which blessing was given them long before this sentence, but it is now solemnly recognized and confirmed to them by the Mediator, in his Father's name. It is observable, he says not—You who are blessed by the Father, but—You who are blessed by My Father; to show us, that all blessings are derived by us from the Father, the fountain of blessing, as he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," through whom we are blessed, Ephesians 1:3. And, finally, they are admitted to this kingdom, as that which was "prepared for them from the

foundation of the world," in God’s eternal purpose, before they, or any of them, had any being; that all the world may see eternal life to be the free gift of God.

Doctrine. The saints shall be made completely happy in the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

Three things I shall here inquire into:

I. The nature of this kingdom.

II. The admission of the saints thereto.

III. And then I shall make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. As to the NATURE of the kingdom of heaven, our knowledge of it is very imperfect; for "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for those who love him," 1 Corinthians 2:9. As, by familiar resemblances, parents instruct their little children concerning things of which otherwise they can have no tolerable notion; so our gracious God, in consideration of our weakness, is pleased to represent to us heaven’s happiness under similitudes taken from earthly things, glorious in the eyes of men; since discoveries of the heavenly glory, divested of earthly resemblances, would be too bright for our weak eyes, and we should but lose ourselves in them. Therefore now we can but speak as children of these things, which the day will fully discover. The state of glory is represented under the idea of a kingdom; a kingdom, among men, being that in which the greatest number of earthly good things center. Now, every saint shall, as a king, inherit a kingdom. All Christ’s subjects shall be kings, each one with his crown upon his head: not that the great King shall divest himself of his royalty, but he will make all his children partakers of his kingdom.

1. The saints shall have kingly POWER and AUTHORITY given them. Our Lord gives not empty titles to his favorites; he makes them kings indeed. The dominion of the saints will be a dominion far exceeding that of the greatest monarch who ever was on earth. They will be absolute masters over sin, which had the dominion over them. They will have a complete rule over their own spirits; an entire management of all their affections and inclinations, which now create them so much molestation: the turbulent root of corrupt affections shall be forever expelled out of that kingdom, and never be able any more to give them the least disturbance. They shall have power over the nations, the ungodly of all nations, "and shall rule them with a rod of iron," Revelation 2:26-27. The whole world of the wicked shall be broken before them: "Satan shall be bruised under their feet," Romans 16:20. He shall never be able to fasten a temptation on them any more: but he will be judged by them; and, in their sight, cast with the reprobate crew into the lake of fire and brimstone. So shall they rule over their oppressors. Having fought the good fight, and gotten the victory, Christ will entertain them as Joshua did his captains, causing them to "come near, and put their feet on the necks of kings," Joshua 10:24.

2. They shall have the ensigns of royalty. For a THRONE, Christ will grant them "to sit with him on his throne," Revelation 3:21. They will be advanced to the highest honor and dignity that they are capable of; and in the enjoyment of it, they will have an eternal undisturbed repose, after all the tossings which they met with in the world, in their way to the throne. For a CROWN, they shall "receive a crown of glory, which never fades away," 1 Peter 5:4. Not a crown of flowers, as subjects, being conquerors or victors, sometimes have gotten: such a crown quickly fades, but

their crown never fades! Not a crown of gold, such as earthly kings wear: even a crown of gold is often stained, and at best can never make those who wear it happy. But it shall be "a crown of glory." A crown of glory is "a crown of life," Revelation 3:10, that life which knows no end: a crown which death can never make to fall off one's head. It must be an abiding crown; for it is a "crown of righteousness," 2 Timothy 4:8. It was purchased for them by "Christ's righteousness," which is imputed to them; they are qualified for it by inherent righteousness; God's righteousness, or faithfulness, secures it to them. They shall have "a SCEPTER, a rod of iron," Revelation 2:27, terrible to all the wicked world. And a SWORD too, "a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people," Psalms 149:6-7.

They shall have royal APPAREL. The royal robes in this kingdom are white robes, Revelation 3:4, "They shall walk with me in white." Which, in a very particular manner, points at the inconceivable glory of the state of the saints in heaven. The Lord is pleased often to represent unto us the glorious state of the saints, by speaking of them as clothed in "white garments." It is promised to the conqueror, that he shall be "clothed in white garments," Revelation 3:5. The elders about the throne are "clothed in white garments," Revelation 4:4. The multitude before the throne are "clothed with white robes," Revelation 7:9; "arrayed in white robes," Revelation 7:13; "made white in the blood of the Lamb," Revelation 7:14. I own, the last two testimonies respect the state of the saints on earth; yet the terms are borrowed from the state of the church in heaven. All garments, properly so called, being badges of sin and shame, shall be laid aside by the saints when they come to their state of glory. But if we consider on what occasions white garments were accustomed to be put on, we shall find much of heaven under them.

(1.) The Romans, when they made their bond-servants free, gave them a white garment as a badge of their FREEDOM. So shall the saints that day receive their white robes; for it is the day of "the glorious liberty of the children of God," Romans 8:21, the day of "the redemption of their body," verse 23. They shall no more see the house of bondage, nor lie any more among the pots. If we compare the state of the saints on earth with that of the wicked, it is indeed a state of freedom, whereas the other is a state of slavery; but, in comparison with their state in heaven, it is but a servitude. A saint on earth is indeed a young prince, and heir to the crown; but his motto may be, "I serve;" "for he differs nothing from a servant, though he be master of all," Galatians 4:1. What are the groans of a saint, the sordid and base work which he is sometimes found employed in, the black and tattered garments which he walks in, but badges of this comparative servitude? But from the day the saints come to the crown, they receive their complete freedom, and serve no more.

They shall be fully freed from sin, which of all evils is the worst, both in itself, and in their apprehension too; how great then must that freedom be, when these "Egyptians, whom they see today," they "shall see them again no more forever!" They shall be free from all temptation to sin: Satan can have no access to tempt them any more, by himself, or by his agents. A full answer will then be given to that petition they have so often repeated, "Lead us not into temptation." No hissing serpent can come into the paradise above; no snare or trap can be laid there, to catch the feet of the saints: they may walk there without fear, for they can be in no hazard; there are no lions' dens, no mountains of leopards, in the promised land. Nay, they shall be set beyond the possibility of sinning, for they shall be confirmed in goodness. It will be the consummate freedom of their will, to be forever unalterably determined to good. And they shall be freed from all the effects of sin:

"God will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever!" Revelation 21:4. What kingdom is like unto this? Death makes its way now into a palace, as easily as into a cottage; sorrow fills the heart of one who wears a crown on his head: royal robes are no defense against pain, and crying by reason of pain. But in this kingdom no misery can have place. All reproaches shall be wiped off; and never shall a tear drop any more from their eyes. They shall not complain of desertions again; the Lord will never hide his face from them: but the Sun of Righteousness shining upon them in his meridian brightness, will dispel all clouds, and give them an everlasting day, without the least mixture of darkness. A deluge of wrath, after a fearful thunder-clap from the throne, will sweep away the wicked from before the judgment-seat, into the lake of fire: but they are, in the first place, like Noah, brought into the ark, and out of harm's way.

(2.) White garments has been a token of PURITY. Therefore, "the Lamb's wife is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," Revelation 19:8. And those who stood before the throne "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Revelation 7:14. The saints shall then put on the robes of perfect purity, and shine in spotless holiness, like the sun in his strength, without the least cloud to intercept his light. Absolute innocence shall then be restored, and every appearance of sin banished far from this kingdom. The guilt of sin, and the reigning power of it are now taken away in the saints; nevertheless, sin dwells in them, Romans 7:20. But then it shall be no more in them: the corrupt nature will be quite removed; that root of bitterness will be plucked up, and no vestiges of it left in their souls; their nature shall be altogether pure and sinless. There shall be no darkness in their minds; but the understanding of every saint, when he is come to his kingdom, will be as a globe of pure and unmixed light. There shall not be the least aversion to good, nor the least inclination to evil, in their wills; but they will be brought to a perfect conformity to the will of God; blessed with angelic purity, and fixed therein. Their affections shall not be liable to the least disorder or irregularity; it will cost no trouble to keep them right: they will get such a fixed habit of purity, as they can never lose. They will be so refined from all earthly dross, as never more to savor of anything but of heaven. Were it possible for them to be set again amidst the ensnaring objects of an evil world, they would walk among them without the least defilement; as the sun shines on the dunghill, yet is untainted; and as the angels preserved their purity in the midst of Sodom. Their graces shall then be perfected; and all the imperfection now cleaving to them done away. There will be no more ground for complaints of weakness of grace: none in that kingdom shall complain of an ill heart, or a corrupt nature. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him," 1 John 3:2.

(3.) Among the Jews, those who desired to be admitted into the PRIESTLY office, being tried, and found to be of the priest's line, and without blemish, were clothed in white, and enrolled among the priests. This seems to be alluded to, Revelation 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." So the saints shall not be kings only, but priests also; for they are a "royal priesthood," 1 Peter 2:9. They will be priests upon their thrones. They are judicially found descended from the Great High Priest of their profession, begotten of him by his Spirit, of the incorruptible seed of the word, and without blemish: so the trial being over, they are admitted to be priests in the temple above, that they may dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

There is nothing upon earth more glorious than a kingdom; nothing more venerable than the priesthood; and both meet together in the glorified state of the saints. "The general assembly of the first-born," Hebrews 12:23, whose is the priesthood and the double portion, appearing in their white robes of glory, will be a reverend and glorious company. That day will show them to be the people whom the Lord has chosen out of all the tribes of the earth, to be near unto him, and to enter into his temple, even into his holy place. Their priesthood, begun on earth, shall be brought to its perfection, when they shall be employed in offering the sacrifice of praise to God and the Lamb forever and ever. They got not their portion in the earth with the rest of the tribes; but the Lord himself was their portion, and will be their double portion, through the ages of eternity.

(4.) They were accustomed to wear white garments in a time of TRIUMPH; to which also there seems to be an allusion, Revelation 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments." And what is heaven but an everlasting triumph? None get there but such as fight, and overcome too. Though Canaan was given to the Israelites as an inheritance, they were required to conquer it, before they could be possessors of it. The saints, in this world, are in the field of battle; often in red garments, garments rolled in blood: but the day approaches, in which they shall "stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," Revelation 7:9, having obtained a complete victory over all their enemies. The palm was used as a sign of victory; because that tree, though oppressed with weights, yet still shoots upwards. And palm trees were carved on the doors of the most holy place, 1 Kings 6:32, which was a special type of heaven; for heaven is the place which the saints are received into as conquerors.

Behold the joy and peace of the saints in their white robes! The joys arising from the view of past dangers, and of riches and honors gained at the very door of death, does most sensibily touch one’s heart: and this will be an ingredient in the everlasting happiness of the saints, which could have had no place in the heaven of innocent Adam, and his sinless offspring, supposing him to have stood. Surely the glorified saints will not forget the treatment which they met with in the world; it will be to the glory of God to remember it, and will also heighten their joy. The Sicilian king, by birth the son of a potter, acted a wise part, in that he would be served at his table with earthen vessels; which could not but put an additional sweetness in his meals, not to be relished by one born heir to the crown. Can food ever be so sweet to any, as to the hungry man? Or can any have such a relish of plenty, as he who has been under pinching straits? The more difficulties the saints have passed through in their way to heaven, the place will be the sweeter to them when they come to it. Every happy stroke, struck in the spiritual warfare, will be a jewel in their crown of glory. Each victory obtained against sin, Satan, and the world, will raise their triumphant joy the higher. The remembrance of the cross will sweeten the crown, and the remembrance of their travel through the wilderness, will put an additional verdure on the fields of glory; while they walk through them, looking back on the day when they went mourning without the sun. And now that they appear triumphing in white robes, it is a sign they have obtained an honorable PEACE; such a peace as their enemies can disturb no more. So everything peculiarly adapted to their militant condition is laid aside. The sword is laid down; and they betake themselves to the pen of a ready writer, to commemorate the praises of Him by whom they overcame. Public ordinances, preaching, sacraments, shall be honorably laid aside; there is no temple there, Revelation 21:22. On earth these were sweet to them: but the travelers being all arrived at home, the inns, appointed for their entertainment by the way, are shut up; the candles are put out when the sun is risen; and the

tabernacle used in the wilderness is folded up, when the temple of glory is come in its place.

Many of the saints' duties will then be laid aside, as one gives his staff out of his hand, when he is come to the end of his journey. Praying shall then be turned to praising: and there being no sin to confess, no needs to seek the supply of, confession and petition shall be swallowed up in everlasting thanksgiving. There will be no mourning in heaven. They have sown in tears: the reaping time of joy is come, and, "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes," Revelation 21:4. No need of mortification of sin there; and self-examination is then at an end. They will not need to watch any more; the danger is over. Patience has had its perfect work, and there is no use for it there. Faith is turned into sight, and hope is swallowed up in the ocean of sensible and full enjoyment. All the rebels are subdued, and the saints quietly sit on their throne; and so the forces, needful in the time of the spiritual warfare, are disbanded; and they carry on their triumph in the profoundest peace.

(5.) White garments were worn on FESTIVAL days, in token of JOY. And so shall the saints be clothed in white garments; for they shall keep an everlasting Sabbath to the Lord, Hebrews 4:9, "There remains therefore a rest," or keeping of a Sabbath, "to the people of God." The Sabbath, in the esteem of saints, is the queen of days: and they shall have an endless Sabbath and rest in the kingdom of heaven; so shall their garments be always white. They will have an eternal rest, with an uninterrupted joy: for heaven is not a resting place, where men may sleep out an eternity; there they rest not day nor night, but their work is their rest, and continual recreation; and toil and weariness have no place there. They rest there in God, who is the center of their souls. Here they find the completion, or satisfaction, of all their desires; having the full enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with him. This is the point, unto which, until the soul come, it will always be restless: but that point reached, it rests; for he is at the last end, and the soul can go no farther. It cannot understand, will, nor desire more; but in him it has what is commensurable to its boundless desires. This is the happy end of all the labors of the saints; their toil and sorrows issue in a joyful rest. The Chaldeans, measuring the natural day, put the day first, and the night last: but the Jews counted the night first, and the day last. Even so the wicked begin with a day of rest and pleasure, but end with a night of everlasting toil and sorrow: but God's people have their gloomy night first, and then comes their day of eternal rest. Which Abraham, in the parable, observed to the rich man in hell, Luke 16:25, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented."

3. If any inquire WHERE the kingdom of the saints lies? it is not in this world; it lies in a better country, "that is, a heavenly one," Hebrews 11:16, a country better than the best of this world; namely, the heavenly Canaan, Immanuel's land, where nothing is lacking to complete the happiness of the inhabitants. This is the happy country; blessed with a perpetual spring, and which yields all things for necessity, convenience, and delight. There men shall eat angels' food; they shall be entertained with the hidden manna, Revelation 2:17, without being set to the painful task of gathering it: they will be fed to the full, with the product of the land falling into their mouths, without the least toil to them. That land enjoys everlasting day, for there is "no night there," Revelation 21:25. Eternal sunshine beautifies this better country, but there is no scorching heat there. No clouds shall be seen there forever: yet it is not a land of drought; the trees of the Lord's planting are set by the rivers of water, and shall never lack moisture, for they will have an eternal supply of the Spirit, by Jesus Christ, from his Father. This is the only country, from whence our

Lord came, and where he is gone again; the country which all the holy patriarchs and prophets had their eye upon while on earth; and which all the saints, who have gone before us, have fought their way to; and unto which the martyrs have joyfully swam through a sea of blood. This earth is the place of the saint's pilgrimage; that is their country, where they find their everlasting rest.

4. The royal city, is that great city, the holy Jerusalem, described at large, Revelation 21:10, to the end of the chapter. It is true, some learned divines place this city in the earth: but the particulars of this description seem to me to favor another world. The saints shall reign in that city, whose wall is of "jasper," Revelation 21:18; "and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones," verse 19; and "the street of pure gold," Revelation 21:21. So that their feet shall be set on that which the men of this world set their hearts upon. This is the city which God "has prepared for them," Hebrews 11:16; "a city that has foundations," Hebrews 11:10; "a continuing city," Hebrews 13:14, which shall stand and flourish, when all the cities of the world are laid in ashes; and which shall not be moved, when the foundations of the world are overturned. It is a city that never changes its inhabitants: none of them shall ever be removed out of it; for life and immortality reign there, and no death can enter into it. It is blessed with a perfect and perpetual peace, and can never be in the least disturbed. Nothing from without can annoy it; the gates therefore are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there, Revelation 21:25. There can nothing from within trouble it. No lack of provision there, no scarcity; no discord among the inhabitants. Whatever contentions are among the saints now, no vestige of their former jarrings shall remain there. Love to God, and to one another, shall be perfected; and those of them who stood at the greatest distance here, will joyfully embrace and delight in one another there.

5. The royal palace is Christ's Father's house, in which "are many mansions," John 14:2. There shall the saints dwell forever. This is the house prepared for all the heirs of glory, even those who dwell in the poorest cottage now, or have nowhere to lay their heads. As the Lord calls his saints to a kingdom, he will provide them a house suitable to the dignity he puts upon them. Heaven will be a convenient, spacious, and glorious house—for those whom the King delights to honor. Never was a house purchased at so great a rate as this, being the purchase of the Mediator's blood; and for no less could it be afforded to them: never was there so much to do, to fit the inhabitants for a house. The saints were, by nature, utterly unfit for this house, and human art and industry could not make them fit for it. But the Father gives the designated inhabitants to the Son, to be by him redeemed; the Son pays the price of their redemption, even his own precious blood; justice gives them access to the house; and the Holy Spirit sanctifies them by his grace; that they may be fit to come in there, where no unclean thing can enter. And no wonder, for it is the King's palace they enter into, Psalms 45:15; the house of the kingdom, where the great King keeps his court, where he has set his throne, and shows forth his glory, in a singular manner, beyond what mortals can conceive.

6. Paradise is their palace garden. "This day shall you be with me in paradise," said our Savior to the penitent thief on the cross, Luke 23:43. Heaven is a paradise for pleasure and delight, where there is both wood and water: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and on either side of the river, the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruits every month, Revelation 22:1-2. How happy might innocent Adam have been in the earthly paradise, where there was nothing lacking for use or delight! Eden was the most pleasant spot of the uncorrupted earth, and paradise the most pleasant spot of

Eden: but what is earth in comparison of heaven? The glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise. There they shall not only see, but "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Revelation 2:7. They shall behold the Mediator's glory, and be satisfied with his goodness. No flaming sword shall be there, to keep the way of that tree of life; but they shall freely eat of it, and live forever. They shall "drink from Your rivers of delight," Psalms 36:8, the sweetest and purest pleasures which Immanuel's land affords, and shall swim in an ocean of unmixed delight forevermore!

7. They shall have royal treasures, sufficient to support the dignity to which they are advanced. Since the street of the royal city is pure gold, and the twelve gates thereof are twelve pearls: their treasure must be of that which is better than gold or pearl. It is an "eternal weight of glory," 2 Corinthians 4:17. O, precious treasure! a treasure not liable to insensible corruption, by moths or rust; a treasure which none can steal from them, Matthew 6:20. Never did any kingdom afford such a precious treasure, nor a treasure of such variety; for "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. Revelation 21:7. No treasures on earth are stored with all things: if they were all put together in one, there would be far more valuable things lacking in that one, than found in it. This, then, is the peculiar treasure of the kings who inherit the kingdom of heaven. They shall lack nothing that may contribute to their full satisfaction. Now they are rich in hope; but then they will have their riches in hand. Now all things are theirs in respect of right; then all shall be theirs in possession. They may go forever through Immanuel's land, and behold the glory and riches thereof, with the satisfying thought, that all they see is eternally their own. It is a pity those should ever be uneasy under the lack of earthly good things, who may be sure they shall inherit all things at length.

8. Though there is no material temple therein, no serving of God in the use of ordinances, as here on earth; yet, as for this kingdom, "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it," Revelation 21:22. As the temple was the glory of Canaan, so will the celestial temple be the glory of heaven. The saints shall be brought in there as a royal priesthood, to dwell in the house of the Lord forever; for Jesus Christ will then make every saint "a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out," Revelation 3:12, as the priests and Levites did, in their courses, go out of the material temple. There the saints shall have the cloud of glory, the divine presence, with most intimate, uninterrupted communion with God: there they shall have Jesus Christ, as the true ark, wherein the fiery law shall be forever hid from their eyes; and the mercy-seat, from which nothing shall be breathed but everlasting peace and good will towards them; the cherubim, the society of holy angels, who shall join with them in eternal admiration of the mystery of Christ; the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps, for "the glory of God" does "enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Revelation 21:23; the incense altar, in the intercession of Christ, who "ever lives to make intercession for them," Hebrews 7:25, eternally exhibiting the manner of his death and suffering, and efficaciously willing forever, that those whom the Father has given him, be with him; and the table of show-bread, in the perpetual feast they shall have together in the enjoyment of God. This leads me more particularly to consider,

9. The INHABITANTS in this kingdom. What would royal power and authority, ensigns of royalty, richest treasures, and all other advantages of a kingdom, avail, without comfortable society? Some crowned heads have had but a wretched life, through the lack of it; their palaces have been unto them as prisons, and their badges of honor, as chains on a prisoner: while, hated of all, they had

none they could trust in, or whom they could have comfortable fellowship with. But the chief part of heaven's happiness lies in the blessed society which the saints shall have there.

(1.) The society of the SAINTS, among themselves, will be no small part of heaven's happiness. The communion of saints on earth is highly prized by all those who are traveling through the world to Zion; and companions in sin can never have such true pleasure and delight in one another, as sometimes the Lord's people have in praying together, and in conversing about those things which the world is a stranger to. Here the saints are but few in a company at best: and some of them are so situated, as that they seem to themselves to dwell alone; having no access to such as they would freely embosom themselves to, in spiritual matters, they sigh and say, "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits - there is no cluster to eat - the good man has perished out of the earth," Micah 7:1-2. But in the general assembly of the first born in heaven, none of all the saints, who ever were or will be on the earth, shall be missing. They will be all of them together in one place, all possess one kingdom, and all sit down together to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here on earth, the best of the saints have their sinful imperfections, making their society less comfortable: but there they shall be perfect, without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," Ephesians 5:27. All natural, as well as sinful imperfections, will be done away; they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," Daniel 12:3.

There we shall see Adam and Eve in the heavenly paradise freely eating of the tree of life; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, no more wandering from land to land, but come to their everlasting rest; all the prophets feasting their eyes on the glory of Him, of whose coming they prophesied; the twelve apostles of the Lamb, sitting on their twelve thrones; all the holy martyrs in their long white robes, with their crowns on their heads; the godly kings advanced to a kingdom which cannot be moved; and those that turn many to righteousness, shining as the stars forever and ever. There we shall see our godly friends, relations, and acquaintances, pillars in the temple of God, to go no more out from us. And it is most probable, that the saints will know one another in heaven; at least they will know their friends, relatives, and those they were acquainted with on earth, and such as have been most eminent in the Church; yet that knowledge will be purified from all earthly thoughts and affections. This seems to be included in that perfection of happiness to which the saints shall be advanced. If Adam knew who and what Eve was, at first sight, when the Lord God brought her to him, Genesis 2:23-24, why should one question but husbands and wives, parents and children, will know each other in glory? If the Thessalonians, converted by Paul's ministry, shall be his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," 1 Thessalonians 2:19, why may we not conclude, that ministers shall know their people, and people their ministers, in heaven? And if the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, knew Moses and Elijah, whom they had never seen before, Matthew 17:4, we have reason to think that we shall know them too, and such as them, when we come to heaven. The communion of saints shall be most intimate there; "they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 8:11. Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:23; which denotes most intimate and familiar fellowship. And though diversity of tongues shall cease, 1 Corinthians 13:8, I make no question, but there will be the use of speech in heaven; and that the saints will glorify God in their bodies there, as well as in their spirits, speaking forth his praises with an audible voice. As for the language, we shall understand what it is, when we come there. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven, the seat of the

blessed, he heard there unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter, 2 Corinthians 12:4. Moses and Elijah, on the mount with Christ, "talked with him," Matthew 17:3, and "spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," Luke 9:31.

(2.) The saints will have the society of all the HOLY ANGELS there. An innumerable company of angels shall be companions to them in their glorified state. Happy were the shepherds who heard the song of the heavenly multitudes when Christ was born! but thrice happy they, who shall join their voices with them in the choir of saints and angels in heaven, when he shall be glorified in all who shall be about him there! Then shall we be brought acquainted with those blessed spirits, who never sinned. How bright will these morning stars shine in the holy place! they were ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; loved them for their Lord and Master's sake; encamped round about them, to preserve them from danger: how joyfully will they welcome them to their everlasting habitations; and rejoice to see them come at length to their kingdom, as the tutor does in the prosperity of his pupils! The saints shall be no more afraid of them, as at times they were accustomed to be: they shall then have put off mortality, and the infirmities of the flesh, and be themselves as the angels of God, fit to enjoy communion and fellowship with them. And both being brought under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall join in the praises of God and of the Lamb "saying, with a loud voice—Worthy is the Lamb who was slain," etc., Revelation 5:11-12. Whether the angels shall, as some think, assume ethereal bodies, that they may be seen by the bodily eyes of the saints, and be in a nearer capacity to converse with them, I know not: but, as they have ways of converse among themselves, we have reason to think, that conversation between them and the saints shall not be forever blocked up.

(3.) They shall have society with the LORD HIMSELF in heaven, glorious communion with God in Christ, which is the perfection of happiness. I choose to speak of communion with God and the man Christ, together; because, as we derive our grace from the Lamb so we shall derive our glory from him too, the man Christ being, if I may be allowed the expression, the center of the divine glory in heaven, from whence it is diffused unto all the saints. This seems to be taught us by the Scriptures which express heaven's happiness by "being with Christ," Luke 23:43, "This day you shall be with Me in paradise." John 17:24, "Father, I will that these also, whom you have given me, be with Me," and remarkably to this purpose is what follows, "that they may behold my glory." 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "So shall we be ever with the Lord," that is, the Lord Christ whom we shall meet in the air. This also seems to be the import of the Scriptures, wherein God and the Lamb, the slain Savior, are jointly spoken of, in point of the happiness of the saints in heaven, Revelation 7:17, "For the Lamb, who is in the center of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 21:3, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them," as in a tabernacle, so the word signifies, that is, in the flesh of Christ: compare John 1:14; and John 1:22, "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it." Here lies the chief happiness of the saints in heaven, without which they never could be happy, though lodged in that glorious place, and blessed with the society of angels there. What I will venture to say of it, shall be comprised in three things:

First, The saints in heaven shall have the glorious presence of God, and of the Lamb: God himself shall be with them, Revelation 21:3, and they shall forever be with the Lord. God is everywhere present in respect of his essence: the saints militant have his special gracious presence; but in heaven they have his glorious presence. There they are brought near to the throne of the great

King, and stand before him, where he shows his inconceivable glory. There they have the tabernacle of God, on which the cloud of glory rests, the all-glorious human nature of Christ, wherein the fullness of the Godhead dwells; not veiled, as in the days of his humiliation, but shining through that blessed flesh, that all his saints may behold his glory, and making that body more glorious than a thousand suns. So that the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, but "the glory of God does enlighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof," properly, "the candle thereof," Revelation 21:23, that is, the Lamb is the luminary or luminous body, which gives light to the city; as the sun and moon now give light to the world, or as a candle enlightens a dark room: and the light proceeding from that glorious luminary of the city, is the glory of God. Sometimes on earth that candle burns very dimly: it was hidden under a bushel in the time of his humiliation; only now and then it darted out some rays of this light, which dazzled the eyes of the spectators. But now it is set on high, in the city of God, where it shines, and shall shine forever, in perfection of glory. It was sometimes laid aside, as a stone disallowed of the builders: but now it is and forever will be, "the light," or luminary of that city; and that, "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," Revelation 21:11. Who can conceive the happiness of the saints in the presence chamber of the great King, where he sits in his regal throne, making his glory eminently to appear in the man Christ? His gracious presence makes a mighty change upon the saints in this world: his glorious presence in heaven, then, must needs raise their graces to perfection, and elevate their capacities. The saints experience that the presence of God, now on earth with them in his grace, can make a little heaven out of a sort of hell. How great, then, must the glory of heaven be, by his presence there in his glory! If a candle, in some sort, beautifies a cottage or prison, how will the shining sun beautify a palace or paradise! The gracious presence of God made a wilderness lightsome—to Moses; the valley of the shadow of death—to David; a fiery furnace—to the three children: what a ravishing beauty, then, shall arise from the Sun of righteousness, shining in his meridian brightness on the street of the city paved with pure gold! This glorious presence of God in heaven, will put a glory on the saints themselves. The most pleasing garden is devoid of beauty, when the darkness of the night sits down on it; but the shining sun puts a glory on the blackest mountains: so those who are now as bottles in the smoke, when set in the glorious presence of God, will be glorious both in soul and body.

Secondly, The saints in heaven shall have the full enjoyment of God and of the Lamb! This is it, which perfectly satisfies the rational creature; and here is the saints' everlasting rest. This will make up all their wants, and fill the desires of their souls, which, after all here obtained, still cry, "Give, give," not without some anxiety; because, though they do enjoy God, yet they do not enjoy him fully. As to the way and manner of this enjoyment, our Lord tells us, John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Now there are two ways, in which a desirable object is known most perfectly and satisfyingly; the one is by sight, the other by experience. Sight satisfies the understanding, and experience satisfies the will. Accordingly, one may say, that the saints enjoy God and Lamb in heaven, [1.] By an intuitive knowledge; [2.] By an experimental knowledge; both of them being perfect. I mean, in respect of the capacity of the creature; for otherwise a creature's perfect knowledge of an infinite Being is impossible. The saints below enjoy God, in that knowledge they have of him by report, from his holy word, which they believe; they see him likewise darkly in the glass of ordinances, which do, as it were, represent the Bridegroom's picture, or shadow, while he is absent. They have also some experimental knowledge of him; they taste that God is good, and that the Lord is gracious.

But the saints above shall not need a good report of the King, they shall see him; therefore, faith ceases: they will behold his own face; therefore, ordinances are no more. They shall drink, and drink abundantly, of that whereof they have tasted; and so hope ceases, for they are at the utmost bounds of their desires.

[1.] The saints in heaven shall enjoy God and the Lamb, by sight, and that in a most perfect manner, 1 Corinthians 13:12, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Here our sight is but mediate, as by a mirror, in which we see not things themselves, but the images of things: but there we shall have an immediate view of God and the Lamb. Here our knowledge is but obscure: there it shall be clear, without the least mixture of darkness. The Lord now converses with his saints through the lattices of ordinances; but then shall they be in the presence chamber with him. There is a veil now on the glorious face, as to us: but when we come to the upper house, that veil, through which some rays of beauty are now darted, will be found entirely taken off; and then shall glorious excellencies and perfections, not seen in him by mortals, be clearly discovered, for we shall see his face, Revelation 22:4. The phrase seems to be borrowed from the honor put on some in the courts of monarchs, to be attendants on the king’s person. We read, Jeremiah 52:25, of "seven men that were" (Hebrew: "seers of the king’s face," that is, as we read it) "near the king’s person." O, unspeakable glory! the great king keeps his court in heaven: and the saints shall all be his courtiers ever near the king’s person, seeing his face. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face," Revelation 22:3-4.

They shall see Jesus Christ, God and man, with their bodily eyes, as he will never lay aside the human nature. They will behold that glorious, blessed body, which is personally united to the divine nature, and exalted above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. There we shall see, with our eyes, that very body which was born of Mary at Bethlehem, and crucified at Jerusalem between two thieves: the blessed head, that was crowned with thorns; the face, that was spit upon; the hands and feet, that were nailed to the cross; all shining with inconceivable glory. The glory of the man Christ will attract the eyes of all the saints, and he will be forever admired by all who believe, 2 Thessalonians 1:10. The wise men fell down, and worshiped him, when they saw him "a young child, with Mary his mother in the house." But O, what a ravishing sight will it be to see him in his kingdom, on his throne, at the Father’s right hand! "The Word was made flesh," John 1:14, and the glory of God shall shine through that flesh, and the joys of heaven spring out from it, unto the saints, who shall see and enjoy God in Christ. For since the union between Christ and the saints is never dissolved, but they continue his members forever; and the members cannot draw their life, but from their head; seeing that which is independent on the head, as to vital influence, is no member: therefore, Jesus Christ will remain the everlasting bond of union between God and the saints; from whence their eternal life shall spring, John 17:2-3, "You have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God," etc. John 17:22-23, "And the glory which you gave me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Therefore the immediate enjoyment of God in heaven, is to be understood in respect of the laying aside of word and sacraments, and such external means, as we enjoy God by in this world; but not as if the saints should then cast off their dependence on their Head for vital influences: nay, "the Lamb who is in the midst of the

throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters," Revelation 7:17.

Now when we shall behold him, who died for us, that we might live for evermore, whose matchless love made him swim through the Red Sea of God's wrath, to make a path in the midst of it for us, by which we might pass safely to Canaan's land; then we shall see what a glorious one he was, who suffered all this for us; what treatment he had in the upper house; what hallelujahs of angels could not hinder him to bear the groans of a perishing multitude on earth, and to come down for their help; and what glory he laid aside for us. Then shall we be more "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge," Ephesians 3:18-19. When the saints shall remember, that the waters of wrath which he was plunged into, are the wells of salvation from whence they draw all their joy; that they have received the cup of salvation in exchange for the cup of wrath his Father gave him to drink, which his sinless human nature shivered at; how will their hearts leap within them, burn with seraphic love, like coals of juniper, and the arch of heaven ring with their songs of salvation! The Jews, celebrating the feast of tabernacles, which was the most joyful of all their feasts, and lasted seven days, went once every day about the altar, singing hosanna with their myrtle, palm, and willow branches in their hands - the two former, signs of victory; the last, of chastity - in the mean time bending their boughs towards the altar. When the saints are presented as a chaste virgin to Christ, and as conquerors have got their palms in their hands, how joyfully will they compass the altar evermore, and sing their hosannas, or rather their hallelujahs about it, bending their palms towards it, acknowledging themselves to owe all unto the Lamb that was slain, and who redeemed them with his blood! To this agrees what John saw, Revelation 7:9-10, "A great multitude stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

They shall see God, Matthew 5:8. They will be happy in seeing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: not with their bodily eyes, in respect of which God is invisible, 1 Timothy 1:17, but with the eyes of their understanding; being blessed with the most perfect, full, and clear knowledge of God, and divine things, which the creature is capable of. This is called the beatific vision, and is the perfection of understanding, the utmost term thereof. It is but an obscure delineation of the glory of God, that mortals can have on earth; a sight, as it were, of "his back parts," Exodus 33:23. But there they will see his face, Revelation 22:4. They shall see him in the fullness of his glory, and behold him fixedly; whereas it is but a passing view they can have of him here, Exodus 34:6. There is a vast difference between the sight of a king in his common clothing, quickly passing by us; and a fixed leisurely view of him, sitting on his throne in his royal robes, his crown on his head, and his scepter in his hand: such a difference will there be, between the greatest manifestation of God that ever a saint had on earth, and the display of his glory in heaven. There the saints shall eternally, without interruption, feast their eyes upon him, and be ever viewing his glorious perfections. And as their bodily eyes shall be strengthened and fitted to behold the glorious majesty of the man Christ; as eagles gaze on the sun, without being blinded thereby; so their minds shall have such an elevation, as will fit them to see God in his glory: their capacities shall be enlarged, according to the measure in which he shall be pleased to communicate himself unto them, for their complete happiness. This blissful sight of God, being quite above our present capacities, we must needs be much in the dark about it. But it seems to be something else than

the sight of that glory, which we shall see with our bodily eyes, in the saints, and in the man Christ, or any other splendor or refulgence from the Godhead whatever: for no created thing can be our chief good and happiness, nor fully satisfy our souls; and it is plain that these things are somewhat different from God himself. Therefore, I conceive, that the souls of the saints shall see God himself: so the Scriptures teach us, that we shall "see face to face, and know even as we are known," 1 Corinthians 13:12; and that "we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

Yet the saints can never have an adequate conception of God: they cannot comprehend that which is infinite. They may touch the mountain, but cannot grasp it in their arms. They cannot, with one glance of their eye, behold what grows on every side: but the divine perfections will be an unbounded field, in which the glorified shall walk eternally, seeing more and more of God; since they can never come to the end of that which is infinite. They may bring their vessels to this ocean every moment, and fill them with new waters. What a ravishing sight would it be, to see all the perfections, and lovely qualities, that are scattered here and there among the creatures, gathered together into one! But even such a sight would be infinitely below this blissful sight the saints shall have in heaven. For they shall see God, in whom all these perfections shall eminently appear infinitely more, whereof there is no vestige to be found in the creatures. In him shall they see everything desirable, and nothing but what is desirable.

Then shall they be perfectly satisfied as to the love of God towards them, which they are now ready to question on every turn. They will no more find any difficulty to persuade themselves of it, by marks, signs, and testimonies: they will have an intuitive knowledge of it. They shall, with the profoundest reverence be it spoken, look into the heart of God, and there see the love he bore to them from all eternity, and the love and goodness he will bear to them for evermore. The glorified shall have a most clear and distinct understanding of divine truths, for in his light we shall see light, Psalms 36:9. The light of glory will be a complete commentary on the Bible, and untie all the hard and knotty questions in divinity. There is no joy on earth comparable to that which arises from the discovery of truth; no discovery of truth comparable to the discovery of Scripture truth, made by the Spirit of the Lord unto the soul: "I rejoice at your word," says the psalmist, "as one who finds great spoil," Psalms 119:162. Yet, while here, it is but an imperfect discovery. How ravishing then will it be, to see the opening of all the treasure which was hidden in that field!

They shall also be led into the understanding of the works of God. The beauty of the works of creation and providence will then be set in due light. Natural knowledge will be brought to perfection by the light of glory. The mysterious web of providence will then be cut out, and laid before the eyes of the saints: and it will appear a most beautiful mixture; so as they shall all say together, on the view of it, "He has done all things well."

But, in a special manner, the work of redemption shall be the eternal wonder of the saints, and they will admire and praise the glorious plan forever. Then shall they get a full view of its suitableness to the divine perfections, and to the case of sinners; and clearly read the covenant that passed between the Father and the Son, from all eternity, concerning their salvation. They shall forever wonder and praise, and praise and wonder, at the mystery of wisdom and love, goodness and holiness, mercy and justice, appearing in the glorious scheme. Their souls shall be eternally satisfied with the sight of God himself, of their election by the Father, their redemption by the Son, and application thereof to them by the Holy Spirit.

[2.] The saints in heaven shall enjoy God in Christ by experimental knowledge, which is, when the object itself is given and possessed. This is the participation of the divine goodness in full measure; which is the perfection of the will, and utmost term thereof. "The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," Revelation 7:17. These are no other but God himself, "the fountain of living waters," who will fully and freely communicate himself unto them. He will pour out his goodness eternally into their souls: then shall they have a most lively sensation, in the innermost part of their souls, of all that goodness they heard of, and believe to be in him, and of what they shall see in him by the light of glory. This will be an everlasting practical exposition of that word, which men and angels cannot sufficiently unfold, namely, "God himself shall - be their God," Revelation 21:3. God will communicate himself unto them fully: they will no more be set to taste of the streams of divine goodness in ordinances, as they were accustomed, but shall drink at the fountain-head. They will be no more entertained with sips and drops, but filled with all the fullness of God. And this will be the entertainment of every saint: for, though in created things, what is given to one is withheld from another; yet this infinite good can fully communicate itself to all, and fill all.

Those who are heirs of God, the great heritage, shall then enter into a full possession of their inheritance: and the Lord will open his treasures of goodness unto them, that their enjoyment may be full. They shall not be stinted to any measure: but the enjoyment shall go as far as their enlarged capacities can reach. As a narrow vessel cannot contain the ocean, so neither can the finite creature comprehend the infinite good: but no measure shall be set to the enjoyment, but what arises from the capacity of the creature. So that, although there are degrees of glory, yet all shall be filled, and have what they can hold; though some will be able to hold more than others. There will be no lack to any of them; all shall be fully satisfied, and perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of divine goodness, according to their enlarged capacities: as when bottles of different sizes are filled, some contain more, others less; yet all of them have what they can contain. The glorified shall have all in God, for the satisfaction of all their desires. No created thing can afford satisfaction to all our desires: clothes may warm us, but they cannot feed us; the light is comfortable, but cannot nourish us. But in God we shall have all our desires, and we shall desire nothing without him. They shall be the happy ones—who desire nothing but what is truly desirable; they shall have all they desire. God will be all in all to the saints: he will be their life, health, riches, honor, peace, and all good things. He will communicate himself freely to them: the door of access to him shall never be shut again for one moment. They may, when they will, take of the fruits of the tree of life, for they will find it on each side of the river, Revelation 22:2. There will be no veil between God and them, to be drawn aside; but his fullness shall never stand open to them. No door to knock at in heaven; no asking to go before receiving; the Lord will allow his people an unrestrained familiarity with himself there.

Now they are in part made "partakers of the divine nature!" but then they shall perfectly partake of it; that is to say, God will communicate to them his own image, make all his goodness not only pass before them, but pass into them, and stamp the image of all his own perfections upon them, so far as the creature is capable of receiving the same: from whence shall result a perfect likeness to him in all things in or about them; which completes the happiness of the creature. This is what the psalmist seems to have had in view, Psalms 17:15, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with your likeness;" the perfection of God’s image following upon the beatific vision. And so says John,

1 John 3:2, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Hence there shall be a most close and intimate union between God and the saints: God shall be in them, and they in God, in a glorious and most perfect union; for then shall their dwelling in love be made perfect. "God is love; and he who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:16. How will the saints be united to God and he to them, when he shall see nothing in them but his own image; when their love shall arrive at its perfection, no nature but the divine nature being left in them; and all imperfection being swallowed up in their glorious transformation into the likeness of God! Their love to the Lord, being purified from the dross of self-love, shall be most pure; so as they shall love nothing but God, and in God. It shall no more be faint and languishing, but burn like coals of juniper. It will be a light without darkness, a flaming fire without smoke. As the live coal, when all the moisture is gone out of it, is all fire, so will the saints be all love, when they come to the full enjoyment of God in heaven, by intuitive and experimental knowledge of him, by sight and full participation of the divine goodness.

Thirdly, From this glorious presence and enjoyment shall arise an unspeakable joy, which the saints shall be filled with. "In your presence is fullness of joy," Psalms 16:11. The saints sometimes enjoy God in the world; but when their eyes are darkened, so as not to perceive it, they have not the comfort of the enjoyment: but then, all mistakes being removed, they shall not only enjoy God, but rest in the enjoyment with inexpressible delight and satisfaction. The desire of earthly things causes torment, and the enjoyment of them often ends in loathing. But though the glorified saints shall ever desire more and more of God, their desires shall not be mixed with the least anxiety, since the fullness of the Godhead stands always open to them; therefore, they shall hunger no more, they shall not have the least uneasiness in their eternal appetite after the hidden manna. Neither shall continued enjoyment cause loathing; they shall never think they have too much: therefore, it is added, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat," Revelation 7:16. The enjoyment of God and the Lamb will be ever fresh and new to them, through the ages of eternity: for they shall drink of living fountains of waters, where new waters are continually springing up in abundance, Revelation 7:17. They shall eat of the tree of life, which, for variety, affords twelve manner of fruits, and these always new and fresh, for it yields every month, Revelation 22:2. Their joy shall be pure and unmixed, without any dregs of sorrow; not slight and momentary, but solid and everlasting, without interruption.

They will enter into joy, Matthew 25:21, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." The expression is somewhat unusual, and brings to my recollection this word of our suffering Redeemer, Mark 14:34, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." His soul was beset with sorrows, as the word there used will bear; the floods of sorrow went round about him, encompassing him on every hand: wherever he turned his eyes, sorrow was before him; it flowed in upon him from heaven, earth, and hell—all at once. Thus was he entered into sorrow, and therefore says, Psalms 69:2, "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Now, why all this, but that his own people might enter into joy? Joy sometimes enters into us now, but has much to do to get access, while we are encompassed with sorrows: but then joy shall not only enter into us, but we shall enter into it, and swim forever in an ocean of joy, where we shall see nothing but joy wherever we turn our eyes. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb will satisfy us with pleasures for evermore: and the glory of our souls and bodies, arising from thence, will afford us everlasting delight. The spirit of heaviness, how closely soever it cleaves to any of the saints now, shall drop

off then: their weeping shall be turned into songs of joy, and bottles of tears shall issue in rivers of pleasure. Happy they, who now sow in tears, which shall spring up in joy in heaven, and will encircle their heads with a weight of glory.

Thus far of the society in this kingdom of the saints.

10. In the last place, the kingdom shall endure FOREVER. As everything in it is eternal, so the saints shall have undoubted certainty, and full assurance, of the eternal duration of the same. This is a necessary ingredient in perfect happiness; for the least uncertainty as to the continuance of any good, is not without some fear, anxiety, and torment; and therefore is utterly inconsistent with perfect happiness. But the glorified shall never have fear, nor cause of fear, of any loss: they shall be "ever with the Lord," 1 Thessalonians 4:17. They shall all attain the full persuasion, that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God, nor from the full enjoyment of him forever. The inheritance "reserved in heaven is incorruptible;" it has no principle of corruption in itself, to make it liable to decay, but endures for evermore. It is undefiled; nothing from without can mar its beauty, nor is there anything in itself to offend those who enjoy it. Therefore, it fades not away, but ever remains in its native luster, and primitive beauty, 1 Peter 1:4. Hitherto of the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

01.04e Heaven cont'd

II. We now proceed to speak of the admission of the saints into this their new kingdom. I shall briefly touch upon two things:

1. The formal admission, in the call upon them from the Judge to come into their kingdom.

2. The quality in which they are admitted and introduced to it.

1. Their admission, the text shows to be, by a voice from the throne: the King calling to them, from the throne, before angels and men, to come to their kingdom. Come and Go are but short words: but they will be such as will afford matter of thought to all mankind, through the ages of eternity; since everlasting happiness turns upon one, and everlasting misery on the other.

Now, our Lord bids the worst of sinners, who hear the gospel, Come; but the most part will not come unto him. Some few, whose hearts are touched by his Spirit, embrace the call, and their souls within them say, "Behold, we come unto you." They give themselves to the Lord, forsake the world and their lusts for him: they bear his yoke, and cast it not off; no, not in the heat of the day, when the weight of it, perhaps, makes them sweat the blood out of their bodies. Behold the fools! says the carnal world. But stay a little, O foolish world! From the same mouth whence they had the call they are now following, another call shall come, that will make amends for all: "Come you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." The saints shall find an inexpressible sweetness in this call, Come.

(1.) Hereby Jesus Christ shows his desire of their society in the upper house, that they may be ever with him there. Thus he will open his heart unto them, as sometimes he did to his Father concerning them, saying, "Father, I will they be with me, where I am," John 17:24. Now, the travail of his soul stands before the throne; not only the souls, but the bodies, he has redeemed; and they must come, for he must be completely satisfied.

(2.) Hereby they are solemnly invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. They were invited to the lower table by the voice of the servants, and the sacred workings of the Spirit within them; and they came, and did partake of the feast of divine communications in the lower house: but Jesus Christ in person shall invite them, before all the world, to the highest table.

(3.) By this he admits them into the mansions of glory. The keys of heaven hang at the belt of our royal Mediator. "All power in heaven" is given to him, Matthew 28:18; and none get in there but whom he admits. When they were living on earth with the rest of the world, he opened the doors of their hearts, entered into them, and shut them again; so as sin could never re-enter, to reign there as formerly: now he opens heaven’s doors to them, draws his doves into the ark, and shuts them in; so as the law, death, and hell, can never get them out again. The saints in this life were still laboring to enter into that rest; but Satan was always pulling them back, their corruptions always drawing them down; insomuch that they have sometimes been left to hang by a hair of promise, if I may be allowed the expression, not without fear of falling into the lake of fire: but now Christ gives

the word for their admission, they are brought in, and put beyond all hazard.

(4.) He speaks to them as the person introducing them into the kingdom, into the presence-chamber of the great King, and unto the throne. Jesus Christ is the great Secretary of heaven, whose office it is to bring the saints into the gracious presence of God now, and to whom alone it belongs to bring them into the glorious presence of God in heaven. Truly heaven would be a strange place to them, if Jesus were not there; but the Son will introduce his brethren into his Father's kingdom; they shall go in with him to the marriage, Matthew 25:10.

2. Let us consider in what quality they are introduced by him.

(1.) He brings them in as the blessed of his Father; so runs the call from the throne, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father," etc. It is Christ's Father's house they are to come into: therefore, he puts them in mind that they are blessed of the Father; dear to the Father, as well as to himself. This it is that makes heaven home to them, namely, that it is Christ's Father's house, where they may be assured of welcome, being married to the Son, and being his Father's choice for that very end. He brings them in for his Father's sake, as well as for his own: they are the blessed of his Father; who, as he is the fountain of the Deity, is also the fountain of all blessings conferred on the children of men.

They are those whom God loved from eternity. They were blessed in the eternal purpose of God, being elected to everlasting life. At the opening of the book of life, their names were found written therein; so that by bringing them to the kingdom, he does but bring them to what the Father, from all eternity, designed for them: being saved by the Son, they are saved according to the Father's purpose, 2 Timothy 1:9. They are those to whom the Father has spoken well. He spoke well to them in his word, which must now receive its full accomplishment. They had his promise of the kingdom, lived and died in the faith of it; and now they come to receive the thing promised. Unto them he has done well. A gift is often in Scripture called a blessing; and God's blessing is ever real, like Isaac's blessing, by which Jacob became his heir: they were all by grace justified, sanctified, and enabled to persevere to the end; now they are raised up in glory, and being tried, stand accepted in the judgment. What remains, then, but that God should crown his own work of grace in them, in giving them their kingdom, in the full enjoyment of himself forever?

Finally, they are those whom God has consecrated; the which also is a Scripture term of blessing, 1 Corinthians 10:16. God set them apart for himself, to be kings and priests unto him; and the Mediator introduces them, as such, to their kingdom and priesthood.

(2.) Christ introduces them, as heirs of the kingdom, to the actual possession of it. "Come, you who are blessed—inherit the kingdom." They are the children of God by regeneration and adoption; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Romans 8:17. Now is the general assembly of the first-born before the throne: their minority is overpast; and the time appointed of the Father for their receiving their inheritance, is come. The Mediator purchased the inheritance for them with his own blood; their rights and evidences were drawn long ago, and registered in the Bible; nay, they have investment of their inheritance in the person of Christ, as their proxy, when he ascended into heaven, "Where the forerunner is for us entered," Hebrews 6:20. Nothing remains, but that they enter into personal possession thereof, which, begun at death, is perfected at the last day; when the saints in their bodies, as well as their souls, go into

their kingdom.

(3.) They are introduced to it as those it was prepared for, from the foundation of the world. The kingdom was prepared for them in the eternal purpose of God, before they, or any of them, had a being; which shows it to be a gift of free grace to them. It was from eternity, the divine purpose, that there should be such a kingdom for the elect; and that all impediments which might oppose their access to it, should be removed out of the way: and also, by the same eternal decree, everyone's place in it was determined and set apart, to be reserved for him, that each of the children coming home at length into their Father's house, might find his own place awaiting him, and ready for him; as at Saul's table, David's place was empty, when he was not there to occupy it himself, 1 Samuel 20:25. And now the appointed time is come, they are brought in, to take their several places in glory.

I shall conclude my discourse on this subject with a word of APPLICATION:

1. To all who claim a right to this kingdom.

2. To those who have indeed a right to it.

3. To those who have no right thereto.

1. To all who CLAIM a right to this kingdom. Since it is evident there is no promiscuous admission into the kingdom of heaven, and none do obtain it but those whose claim to it is solemnly tried by the great Judge, and, after trial, supported as good and valid; it is necessary that all of us impartially try and examine, whether, according to the laws of the kingdom, contained in the Holy Scriptures, we can verify and make good our claim to this kingdom. The hopes of heaven, which most men have, are built on such sandy foundations, as can never abide the trial; having no ground whatever but in their own deluded imagination: such hopes will leave those who entertain them, miserably disappointed at last. Therefore, it is not only our duty, but our interest, to put the matter to a fair trial in time. If we find we have no right to heaven, we are yet in the way; and what we have not, we may obtain: but if we find we have a right to it, we shall then have the comfort of a happy prospect into eternity; which is the greatest comfort one is capable of in the world.

If you inquire, how you may know whether you have a right to heaven or not, I answer, You may know that by the state you are now in. If you are yet in your natural state, you are children of wrath, and not children of this kingdom; for that state, to those who live and die in it, issues in eternal misery. If you be brought into the state of grace, you have a just claim to the state of glory; for grace will certainly issue in glory at length. This kingdom is an inheritance, which none but the children of God can justly claim. Now, we become the children of God by regeneration, and union with Christ his Son; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Romans 8:17. These, then, are the great points upon which our evidences for the state of glory depend. Therefore, I refer you to what is said on the state of grace, for satisfying you as to your right to glory.

If you are heirs of glory, "the kingdom of God is within you," by virtue of your regeneration and union with Christ.

(1.) The kingdom of heaven has the throne in your heart, if you have a right to that kingdom: Christ is in you, and God is in you; and having chosen him for your portion, your soul has taken up its

everlasting rest in him, and gets no true rest but in him; as the dove, until she came into the ark. To him the soul habitually inclines, by virtue of the new nature, the divine nature, which the heirs of glory are partakers of, Psalms 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you."

(2.) The laws of heaven are in your heart, if you are an heir of heaven, Hebrews 8:10, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Your mind is enlightened in the knowledge of the laws of the kingdom, by the Spirit of the Lord, the instructor of all the heirs of glory; for whoever may lack instruction, surely an heir to a crown shall not lack it. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God," John 6:45. Therefore, though father and mother leave them early, or are in no concern about their Christian education, and they be soon put to work for their daily bread, yet they shall not lack teaching. Your heart is changed, and you bear God's image, which consists in "righteousness and true holiness," Ephesians 4:24. Your soul is reconciled to the whole law of God, and at war with all known sin. In vain do they pretend to the holy kingdom, who are not holy in heart and life; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14. If heaven is a rest, it is for spiritual laborers, not for loiterers. If it is an eternal triumph, they are not in the way to it who avoid the spiritual warfare, and are in no care to subdue corruption, resist temptation, and to cut their way to it through the opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh.

(3.) The treasure in heaven is the chief in your esteem and desire; for it is your treasure, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matthew 6:21. If it is not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, which your heart is in the greatest care and concern to obtain; if you are driving a trade with heaven, and your chief business lies there; it is a sign that your treasure is there, for your heart is there. But if you are of those who wonder why so much ado is made about heaven and eternal life, as if less might serve the turn, you are like to have nothing to do with it at all. Carnal men value themselves most on their treasures upon earth; with them, the things that are not seen are weighed down by the things that are seen, and no losses so much affect them as earthly losses: but the heirs of the crown of glory value themselves most on their treasures in heaven, and will not put their private estate in the balance with their eternal kingdom; nor will the loss of the former go so near their hearts, as the thoughts of the loss of the latter. Where these first-fruits of heaven are to be found, the eternal weight of glory will surely follow after; while the lack of them must be admitted according to the word, to be an incontestable evidence of an heir of wrath.

2. Let the heirs of the kingdom behave themselves suitably to their character and dignity. Live as having the faith and hope of this glorious kingdom: let your heart be in heaven, Php 3:20. Let your souls delight in communion with God while you are on earth, since you look for your happiness in communion with him in heaven. Let your speech and actions savor of heaven; and in your manner of life, look like the country to which you are going: that it may be said of you, as of Gideon's brethren, Judges 8:18, "Each one resembled the children of a king." Maintain a holy contempt of the world, and of the things of the world. Although others, whose earthly things are their best things, set their hearts upon them, yet it befits you to set your feet on them, since your best things are above. This world is but the country through which lies your road to Immanuel's land. Therefore, pass through it as pilgrims and strangers; and do not immerse yourself in the encumbrances of it, so as to retard you in your journey. It is unworthy of one born to a palace, to set his heart on a poor cottage, to dwell there. It is unworthy of one running for a prize of gold, to

depart from his way to gather pebbles and sticks. How much more is it unworthy of an heir of the kingdom of heaven, to be groveling among the baubles of this world—when he should be going on to receive his crown. The prize set before you challenges your utmost zeal, activity, and diligence; and holy courage, resolution, and magnanimity, befit those who are to inherit the crown. You cannot come to it without fighting your way to it, through difficulties from without and from within: but the kingdom before you is sufficient to balance them all, though you should be called to resist even unto blood. Prefer Christ's cross before the world's crown, and want in the way of duty, before ease and wealth in the way of sin: "Choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Hebrews 11:25. In a common inn, strangers perhaps fare better than the children; but here lies the difference: the children are to pay nothing for what they receive; but the strangers get their bill, and must pay completely for all they have had. Did we consider the after-reckoning of the wicked for all the smiles of common providence they meet with in the world, we would not grudge them their good things here, nor take it amiss that God keeps our best things last. Heaven will make up all the saints' losses, and there all tears will be wiped away from their eyes.

It is worth observing, that there is such a variety of Scripture notions of heaven's happiness, as may suit every afflicted case of the saints. Are they oppressed? The day comes in which they shall have the dominion. Is their honor laid in the dust? A throne to sit upon, a crown on their head, and a scepter in their hand, will raise it up again. Are they reduced to poverty? Heaven is a treasure. If they be forced to leave their own homes, yet Christ's Father's house is ready for them. Are they driven to the wilderness? There is a city prepared for them. Are they banished from their native country? They shall inherit a better country. If they are deprived of public ordinances, the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple there, where they are going; a temple, the doors of which none can shut. If their life is full of bitterness, heaven is a paradise for pleasure. If they groan under the remains of spiritual bondage, there is a glorious liberty abiding them. Do their defiled garments make them ashamed? The day comes, in which their robes shall be white, pure, and spotless. The battle against flesh and blood, principalities and powers, is indeed sore: but a glorious triumph awaits them. If the toil and labors of the Christian life be great, there is an everlasting rest for them in heaven. Are they judged unworthy of the society of angels in heaven? Do they complain of frequent interruptions of their communion with God? There they shall go no more out, but shall see his face for evermore. If they are in darkness here, eternal light is there. If they grapple with death, there they shall have everlasting life. And, to sum up all in one word, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things," Revelation 21:7. He shall have peace and plenty, profit and pleasure, everything desirable; full satisfaction to his most enlarged desires. Let the expectants of heaven, then, lift up their heads with joy; let them gird up their loins, and so run that they may obtain; trampling on everything that may hinder them in their way to the kingdom. Let them never account any duty too hard, nor any cross too heavy, nor any pains too great, so that they may attain the crown of glory.

3. Let those who have no right to the kingdom of heaven, be stirred up to seek it with all diligence. Now is the time, wherein the children of wrath may become heirs of glory: when the way to everlasting happiness is opened, it is no time to sit still and loiter. Raise up your hearts towards the glory that is to be revealed; and be not always in search of rest in this perishing earth.

What can all your worldly enjoyments avail you, while you have no solid ground to expect heaven after this life is gone? The riches and honors, profits and pleasures, which must be buried with us, and cannot accompany us into another world—are but a wretched portion, and will leave men comfortless at length. Ah! why are men so eager in their lifetime to receive their good things? Why are they not rather careful to secure a saving interest in the kingdom of heaven, which would never be taken from them, but afford them a portion to make them happy through the ages of eternity? If you desire honor, there you may have the highest honor, which will last when the world's honors are laid in the dust! If you desire riches, heaven will yield you a treasure; and there are pleasures for evermore. O! be not despisers of the pleasant land, neither judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; close with Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and you shall inherit all things. Walk in the way of holiness, and it will lead you to the kingdom. Fight against sin and Satan, and you shall receive the crown. Forsake the world, and the doors of heaven will be opened to receive you!

01.04f Hell

HELL by Thomas Boston (1676 -1732)

Then He shall say unto those on the left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Matthew 25:41

INTRODUCTION

Were there no other place of eternal lodging but heaven, I should here have closed my discourse of man's eternal state; but as in the other world there is a prison for the wicked, as well as a palace for saints, we must also inquire into that state of everlasting misery; which the worst of men may well bear with, without crying- 'Are you come to torment us before the time?' since there is yet access to flee from the wrath to come; and all that can be said of it comes short of what the dammed will feel; for 'who knows the power of God's anger?' The last thing which our Lord did, before He left the earth, was, 'He lifted up his hands, and blessed his disciples' (Luke 24:50-51). But the last thing He will do, before He leaves the throne, is to curse and condemn His enemies; as we learn from the text which contains the dreadful sentence wherein the everlasting misery of the wicked is declared. In which, three things may be taken notice of–

1. The 'quality' of the condemned- 'you cursed.' The Judge finds the 'curse of the law' upon them as transgressors, and sends them away with it, from His presence, into hell, there to be fully executed upon them.

2. The 'punishment' which they are sentenced to, and to which they were always bound over by virtue of the curse. And it is twofold- the punishment of 'loss', in separation from God and Christ- 'Depart from Me;' And the punishment of 'sense'- in most poignant and extreme torments- Depart from Me 'into fire.'

3. The 'aggravations' of their torments–

a. They are ready for them, they are not to expect a moment's respite. The fire is prepared and ready to catch hold of those who are thrown into it. b. They will have the society of devils in their torments, being shut up with them in hell. They must depart into the same fire, prepared for Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and his angels; namely, other reprobate angels who fell with him, and became devils. It is said to be prepared for them; because the demons sinned and were condemned to hell before man sinned. This speaks further terror to the damned, that they must go into the same torments, and place of torment, with the devil and his angels. They hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments- his works they would do, and they must receive the wages, which is death. In this life they joined with devils, in malice against God and Christ, and the way of holiness. And in eternity, they must lodge with them.

Thus all the goats shall be shut up together- for that name is common to devils and wicked men, in Scripture (Leviticus 17:7), where the word rendered devils properly signifies hairy ones, or goats, in the shape of which creatures, devils delighted much to appear to their worshipers. c. The last

aggravation of their torment is the eternal duration thereof; they must depart into 'everlasting' fire. This is what puts the top-stone upon their misery, namely, that it shall never have an end.

DOCTRINE– THE WICKED SHALL BE SHUT UP UNDER THE CURSE OF GOD, IN EVERLASTING MISERY, WITH THE DEVILS IN HELL!

After having proved that there shall be a resurrection of the body and a general judgment, I think it is not needful to insist on proving the truth of future punishment. The same conscience there is in men of a future judgment, bears witness also of the truth of future punishment. (And that the punishment of the damned shall not be annihilation, or a reducing them to nothing, will be clear in the progress of our discourse.) In treating of this awful subject I shall inquire into these four things–

I. The curse under which the damned shall be shut up.

II. Their misery under that curse.

III. Their society with devils in this miserable state.

IV. The eternity of the whole.

I. THE "CURSE" UNDER WHICH THE DAMMED SHALL BE SHUT UP IN HELL–

It is the terrible sentence of the law by which they are bound over to the wrath of God, as transgressors. This curse does not first come upon them when standing before the tribunal to receive their sentence; but they were born under it, they led their lives under it in this world, they died under it, and rose with it out of their graves. And the Judge finding the curse upon them, sends them away with it into the pit, where it shall lie on them through all the ages of eternity. By nature all men are under the curse. But it is removed from the elect by virtue of their union with Christ. It abides on the rest of sinful mankind, and by it they are devoted to destruction, and separated to evil.

Thus shall the damned forever be persons devoted to destruction! separate and set apart from the rest of mankind, unto evil, as vessels of wrath! set up as marks for the arrows of divine wrath! and made the common receptacle and shore of eternal vengeance! This curse has its first-fruits on earth, which are a pledge of the whole lump that is to follow. Hence it is, that temporal and eternal miseries on the enemies of God, are sometimes included under one and the same expression in the threatening. What is that judicial blindness to which many are given up, 'whom the god of this world has blinded' (2 Corinthians 4:4), but the first fruits of hell and of the curse? Their sun is going down at noon-day, their darkness increasing, as if it would not stop until it issue in utter darkness.

Many a lash in the dark, does conscience give the wicked, which the world does not hear of- and what is that but the never-dying worm already begun to gnaw them? And there is not one of these but they may call it Joseph, for 'the Lord shall add another'; or rather Gad, for 'a troop comes.'

These drops of wrath are terrible forebodings of the full shower which is to follow. Sometimes they are given up to their vile affections, that they have no more command over them (Romans 1:26). So their lusts grow up more and more towards perfection, if I may so speak. As in heaven grace comes to its perfection, so in hell sin arrives at its highest pitch; and as sin is thus advancing upon the man, he is the nearer and likelier to hell.

There are three things that have a fearful aspect here–

1. When everything that might do good to men's souls, is blasted to them; so that their blessings are cursed- sermons, prayers, admonitions, and reproofs, which are powerful towards others, are quite ineffectual to them.

2. When men go on in sinning still, in the face of plain rebukes from the Lord, in ordinances and providences. God meets them with rods in the way of their sin, as it were striking them back; yet they rush forward. What can be more like hell, where the Lord is always smiting and the damned always sinning against Him?

3. When everything in one's lot is turned into fuel for one's lusts. Thus, adversity and prosperity, poverty and wealth, the lack of ordinances and the enjoyment of them, do all but nourish the corruptions of many. Their vicious stomachs corrupt whatever they receive, and all does but increase noxious humors. But the full harvest follows, in that misery which they shall forever lie under in hell; that wrath which, by virtue of the curse, shall come upon them to the uttermost- which is the curse fully executed. This black cloud opens upon them, and the terrible thunderbolt strikes them, by that dreadful voice from the throne, 'Depart from me, you cursed', which will give the whole wicked world a dismal view of what is in the bosom of the curse.

1. It is a voice of extreme indignation and wrath, a furious rebuke from the Lion of the tribe of Judah! His looks will be most terrible to them; His eyes will cast flames of fire on them; and His words will pierce their hearts, like envenomed arrows! When He will thus speak them out of His presence for ever, and by His word chase them away from before the throne, they will see how keenly wrath burns in His heart, against them for their sins!

2. It is a voice of extreme disdain and contempt from the Lord. Time was when they were pitied, admonished to pity themselves, and to be the Lord's; yet they despised Him, they would have none of Him- but now they shall be buried out of His sight, under everlasting contempt!

3. It is a voice of extreme hatred. Hereby the Lord shuts them out of His affections of love and mercy. 'Depart, you cursed.' I cannot endure to look at you; there is not one purpose of good to you in My heart; nor shall you ever hear one word more of hope from Me.

4. It is a voice of eternal rejection from the Lord. He commands them to be gone and so casts them off forever. Thus the doors of heaven are shut against them; the gulf is fixed between them and it, and they are driven to the pit.

Now, were they to cry with all possible earnestness- 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' they will hear nothing but- 'Depart, depart you cursed ones.' Thus shall the dammed be shut up under the curse.

Application- Let all those who being yet in their natural state, are under the curse, consider this, and flee to Jesus Christ in time, that they may be delivered from it. How can you sleep in that state, being under the curse!

Jesus Christ is 'now' saying unto you- 'Come you cursed, I will take the curse from off you, and give you the blessing.' The waters of the sanctuary are now running, to heal the cursed ground; take heed to improve them for that end to your own souls, and fear it as hell to get no spiritual advantage thereby.

Remember that 'the miry places,' which are neither sea nor dry land, are a fit emblem of hypocrites; 'and the marshes,' that neither breed fish, nor bear trees, but the waters of the sanctuary leave them, as they find them, in their barrenness, 'shall not be healed,' seeing they spurn the only remedy. 'They shall be given to salt,' -left under eternal barrenness, set up for the monuments of the wrath of God, and concluded forever under the curse! (Ezekiel 47:11).

Let all CURSERS consider this, whose mouths are filled with cursing themselves and others. He who 'clothes himself with cursing,' shall find the curse 'come into his affections like water, and oil into his bones' (Psalms 109:18), if repentance prevent it not. He shall get all his imprecations against himself fully answered, in the day wherein he stands before the tribunal of God- and shall find the killing weight of the curse of God, which he now makes light of.

II. THE MISERY OF THE DAMNED, under that curse–

It is a misery which the tongues of men and angels cannot sufficiently express. God always acts like Himself- as no favors can be compared to His, so also His wrath and terrors are without a parallel. As the saints in heaven are advanced to the highest pitch of happiness, so the damned in hell arrive at the height of misery.

Two things here I shall soberly inquire into- the punishment of 'loss', and the punishment of 'sense', in hell. But since these also are such things as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, we must, as geographers do, leave a large void for the unknown land, which that day will discover.

A. THE PUNISHMENT OF 'LOSS' WHICH THE DAMNED SHALL UNDERGO IS SEPARATION FROM THE LORD. 'Depart from me, you cursed.' This will be a stone upon their grave's mouth, as 'the talent of lead' (Zechariah 5:7-8), that will hold them down forever.

They shall be eternally separated from God and Christ. Christ is the way to the Father- but the way, as for them, shall be everlastingly blocked up. The bridge shall be drawn, and the great gulf fixed; so shall they be shut up in a state of eternal separation from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

They will be 'locally' separated from the man Christ and shall never come into the seat of the blessed, where He appears in His glory; but they will be cast out into outer darkness (Matthew 22:13).

They cannot indeed be locally separated from God, they cannot be in a place where He is not; since He is, and will be present everywhere- 'If I make my bed in hell,' says the psalmist, 'behold you are there' (Psalms 139:8). But they shall be miserable beyond expression, in a 'relative' separation from God. Though He will be present in the very center of their souls, (if I may so express it), while they are wrapped up in fiery flames, in utter darkness- it shall only be to feed them with the vinegar of His wrath, and to punish them with the emanations of His revenging justice.

They shall never more taste of His goodness and bounty, nor have the least glimpse of hope from Him. They will see His heart to be absolutely alienated from them, and that it cannot be favorable towards them; that they are the party against whom the Lord will have indignation forever. They shall be deprived of the glorious presence and enjoyment of God- they shall have no part in the beatific vision; nor see anything in God towards them but one wave of wrath rolling after another!

This will bring upon them overwhelming floods of sorrow for evermore.

They shall never taste of the rivers of pleasures which the saints in heaven enjoy; but shall have an everlasting winter and a perpetual night, because the Sun of Righteousness has departed from them and so they are left in utter darkness. So great as heaven's happiness is, so great will their loss be- for they can have none of it forever.

1. This separation will be AN INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION. 'Now' they depart from Him. They will not come to Him, though they are called and entreated to come. But 'then' they shall be driven away from Him, when they would gladly abide with Him. Although the question 'What is your beloved more than another beloved?' is frequent now among the despisers of the Gospel, there will be no such question among all the damned; for then they will see that man's happiness is only to be found in the enjoyment of God, and that the loss of Him is a loss that can never be balanced.

2. IT WILL BE A TOTAL AND UTTER SEPARATION. Though the wicked are, in this life, separated from God, yet there is a kind of interchange between them- He gives them many good gifts, and they give Him, at least, some good words; so that the peace is not altogether hopeless. But 'then' there shall be a total separation, the damned being cast into utter darkness, where there will not be the least gleam of light or favor from the Lord; which will put an end to all their fair words to Him.

3. IT WILL BE A FINAL SEPARATION. They will part with Him, never more to meet, being shut up under everlasting horror and despair. The match between Jesus Christ and unbelievers, which has so often been carried forward, and put back again, shall then be broken up forever; and never shall one message of favor or goodwill go between the parties anymore. This punishment of loss, in a total and final separation from God, is a misery beyond what mortals can conceive, and which the dreadful experience of the damned can only sufficiently unfold. But that we may have some conception of the horror of it, let these following things be considered–

(1) God is the chief good; therefore, to be separated from Him, must be the chief evil. Our native country, our relations, and our life, are good, and therefore to be deprived of them we reckon a great evil; and the better anything is, so much the greater evil, is the loss of it. Wherefore, God being the chief good, and no good comparable to Him, there can be no loss so great as the loss of God. The full enjoyment of Him is the highest pinnacle of happiness the creature is capable of arriving at. To be fully and finally separated from Him, must then be the lowest step of misery which the rational creature can be reduced to. To be cast off by men, by good men, is distressing; what must it then be, to be rejected of God, of goodness itself?

(2) God is the fountain of all goodness, from which all goodness flows to the creatures and by which it is continued in them, and to them. Whatever goodness or perfection, natural as well as moral, is in any creature- it is from God, and depends upon Him, as the light is from, and depends on, the sun. For every created being, as such, is a dependent one.

Wherefore, a total separation from God, wherein all comfortable communication between God and a rational creature is absolutely blocked up, must of necessity bring along with it a total eclipse of all light of comfort and ease whatever. If there is but one window, or open place, in a house, and that be totally shut up, it is evident there can be nothing but darkness in that house. Our Lord tells us (Matthew 19:17), 'There is none good but one, that is, God.' Nothing good or comfortable is

originally from the creature- whatever good or comfortable thing one finds in one's self, as health of body, peace of mind- whatever sweetness, rest, pleasure, or delight, one finds in other creatures, as in food, drink, arts and sciences- all these are but some faint rays of Divine perfections, communicated from God unto the creature, and depending on a constant influence from Him for their being; which failing, they would immediately be gone- for it is impossible that any created thing can be to us more or better than what God makes it to be.

All the rivulets of comfort we drink of, within or outside of ourselves, come from God as their spring-head. If the course of which towards us being stopped, of necessity they must all dry up. So that when God goes, all that is good and comfortable goes with Him, all ease and quiet of body and mind (Hosea 9:12), 'Woe also to them, when I depart from them.' When the wicked are totally and finally separated from Him, all that is comfortable in them, or about them, returns to its fountain- as the light goes away with the sun, and darkness succeeds in the room thereof. Thus, in their separation from God, all peace is removed far away from them, and pain in body and anguish of soul, succeed to it.

All joy goes, and unmixed sorrow settles in them. All quiet and rest separate from them and they are filled with horror and rage. Hope flies away, and despair seizes them. Common operations of the Spirit, which now restrain them, are withdrawn forever, and sin comes to its utmost height. Thus we have a dismal view of the horrible spectacle of sin and misery, which a creature proves when totally separated from God and left to itself; and we may see this separation from God to be the very hell of hell. Being separated from God, they are deprived of all good. The good things which they set their hearts upon in this world are beyond their reach there. The covetous man cannot enjoy his wealth there; nor the ambitious man his honors; nor the sensual man his pleasures- no, not a drop of water to cool his tongue (Luke 16:24-25). No food or drink there to strengthen the faint; no sleep to refresh the weary- and no music, or pleasant company, to comfort and cheer up the sorrowful. And as for those holy things they despised in the world, they shall never more hear of them, nor see them. No offer of Christ there, no pardon, no peace; no wells of salvation in the pit of destruction. In one word, they shall be deprived of whatever might comfort them, being totally and finally separated from God, the fountain of all goodness and comfort.

(3) Man naturally desires to be happy, being conscious to himself that be is not self-sufficient. He forever has a desire of something outside of himself, to make him happy; and the soul being, by its natural make and constitution, capable of enjoying God, and nothing else being commensurable to its desires, it can never have true and solid rest until it rests in the enjoyment of God. This desire of happiness the rational creature can never lay aside, no, not even in hell.

Now, while the wicked are on earth, they seek their satisfaction in the creature. And when one thing fails, they go to another- thus they spend their time in the world, deceiving their own souls with vain hopes.

But, in the next world, all comfort in the creatures failing, and the shadows which they are now pursuing having all vanished in a moment, they shall be totally and finally separated from God, and see they have thus lost Him. So the doors of earth and heaven both are shut against them at once. This will create them unspeakable anguish, while they shall live under an eternal gnawing hunger after happiness, which they certainly know shall never be in the least measure satisfied, all doors being closed on them. Who then can imagine how this separation from God shall cut the damned

to the heart! How they will roar and rage under it! How it will sting and gnaw them through the ages of eternity!

(4) The damned shall know that some are perfectly happy, in the enjoyment of that God from whom they themselves are separated; and this will aggravate the sense of their loss- that they can never have any share with those happy ones. Being separated from God, they are separated from the society of the glorified saints and angels. They may see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, but can never come into their company; being, as unclean lepers, thrust outside of the camp, and excommunicated from the presence of the Lord, and of all His holy ones.

It is the opinion of some, that every person in heaven or hell shall hear and see all that passes in either state. Whatever is to be said for this, we have ground from the Word to conclude that the damned shall have a very accurate knowledge of the happiness of the saints in heaven; for what else can be meant of the rich man in hell seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom?

One thing is plain in this case, that their own torments will give them such notions of the happiness of the saints, as a sick man has of health, or a prisoner has of liberty. And as they cannot fail of reflecting on the happiness of those in heaven, without any hope of attaining to contentment with their own lot, so every thought of that happiness will aggravate their loss.

It would be a mighty torment to a hungry man, to see others liberally feasting, while he is so chained up as not to have one crumb to stop his gnawing appetite. To bring music and dancing before a man laboring under extreme pains, would but increase his anguish. How then will the songs of the blessed, in their enjoyment of God, make the damned mourn under their separation from Him!

(5) They will remember that time was when they might have been made partakers of the blessed company of saints, in their enjoyment of God- and this will aggravate their sense of the loss. All will remember that there was once a possibility of it; that they were once in the world, in some corners of which the way of salvation was laid open to men's view- and may wish they had gone round the world, until they had found it out.

Despisers of the Gospel will remember, with bitterness, that Jesus Christ, with all His benefits, was offered to them- that they were exhorted, entreated, and pressed to accept, but would not; and that they were warned of the misery they now feel, and exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, but they would not hearken. The Gospel offer slighted will make a hot hell, and the loss of an offered heaven, will be a sinking weight on the spirits of unbelievers in the pit.

Some will remember that there was a probability of their being eternally happy; that once they seemed to stand fair for it, and were not far from the kingdom of God; that they had once almost consented to the blessed bargain- the pen was in their hand, as it were, to sign the marriage contract between Christ and their souls; but unhappily they dropped it, and turned away from the Lord, to their lusts again.

Others will remember that they thought themselves sure of heaven, but, being blinded with pride and self-conceit, they were above ordinances, and beyond instruction, and would not examine their state- which was their ruin. But then they will in vain wish that they had reputed themselves the worst of the congregation, and curse the fond conceit they had of themselves, and that others

had of them too.

Thus it will sting the damned, that they might have escaped this loss.

(6) They will see the loss to be irrecoverable- that they must eternally lie under it, never, never to be repaired. Might the damned, after millions of ages in hell, regain what they have lost, it would be some ground of hope; but the prize is gone, and never can be recovered.

There are two things which will pierce them to the heart–

1. That they never knew the worth of it, until it was irrecoverably lost- Should a man give away an earthen pot full of gold for a trifle, not knowing what was in it until it was quite gone from him, and past recovery, how would this foolish action gall him, upon the discovery of the riches in it!

Such a one's case may be a faint resemblance of the case of despisers of the Gospel, when in hell they lift up their eyes, and behold that to their torment, that which they will not see now to their salvation.

2. That they have lost it for dross and dung- sold their part of heaven, and not enriched themselves with the price. They have lost heaven for earthly profits and pleasures, and now both are gone together from them. The drunkard's cups are gone, the covetous man's gain, the voluptuous man's carnal delights, and the sluggard's ease are gone- nothing is left to comfort them now. The happiness they lost remains indeed, but they can have no part in it forever.

Application- Sinners! be persuaded to come to God through Jesus Christ, uniting with Him through the Mediator; that you may be preserved from this fearful separation from Him. Oh, be afraid to live in a state of separation from God, lest that which you now make your choice become your eternal punishment hereafter. Do not reject communion with God, cast not off the communion of saints, for it will be the misery of the damned to be driven out from that communion.

Cease to build up the wall of separation between God and yourself, by continuing in your sinful courses. Repent rather, in the present time, and so pull the wall down, lest the topstone be laid upon it, and it stand forever between you and happiness.

Tremble at the thought of rejection and separation from God. By whomsoever men are rejected upon earth, they ordinarily find some pity; but, if you be thus separated from God, you will find all doors shut against you.

You will find no pity from any in heaven; neither saints nor angels will pity those whom God has utterly cast off. None will pity you in hell, where there is no love, but only loathing- all being loathed of God, loathing Him, and loathing one another. This is a day of losses and fears. I show you a loss you would do well to fear in time- be afraid lest you lose God; for if you do, eternity will be spent in roaring out lamentations for this loss.

Oh horrid stupidity! Men are in a mighty care and concern to prevent worldly losses; but they are in danger of losing the enjoyment of God forever and ever; in danger of losing heaven, the communion of the blessed, and all good things for soul and body in another world; yet they are as careless in that matter as if they were incapable of thought!

Oh compare this present day with the day our text aims at. Today heaven is opened for those who hitherto have rejected Christ; and yet there is room, if they will come. But in that day the doors shall be shut.

'Now' Christ is saying unto you, 'Come!' 'Then' be will say- 'Depart!' seeing you would not come when you were invited. 'Now' pity is shown; the Lord pities you, His servants pity you, and tell you that the pit is before you, and cry to you, that you do yourselves no harm. But 'then' you shall have no pity from God or man.

B. THE DAMNED SHALL BE PUNISHED IN HELL WITH THE PUNISHMENT OF 'SENSE' AS THEY MUST DEPART FROM GOD INTO EVERLASTING FIRE.

I am not disposed to dispute what kind of fire it is into which they shall depart, to be tormented forever, whether a material fire or not. Experience will more than satisfy the curiosity of those who are disposed rather to dispute about it, than to seek how to escape it.

Neither will I meddle with the question, Where is it? It is enough that the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched, will be found somewhere by impenitent sinners.

1. But, first, I shall prove that, whatever kind of fire it is- it is more vehement and terrible than any fire we on earth are acquainted with.

Burning is the most terrible punishment, and brings the most intense pain and torment with it. By what reward could a man be induced to hold but his hand in the flame of a candle for one hour?

All imaginable pleasures on earth will never prevail with the most voluptuous man, to venture to lodge but one half hour in a burning fiery furnace! Nor would all the wealth in the world prevail with the most covetous man to do it. Yet, on much lower terms do most men, in effect, expose themselves to everlasting fire in hell, which is more vehement and terrible than any fire we on earth are acquainted with; as will appear by the following considerations–

(a) As in heaven, grace being brought to its perfection, profit and pleasure also arrive at their height there. So sin, being come to its height in hell, the punishment of evil also arrives at its perfection there.

Therefore, as the joys of heaven are far greater than any joys which the saints obtain on earth, so the punishments of hell must be greater than any earthly torments whatever- not only in respect of the continuance of them, but also in respect of vehemence and intenseness.

(b) Why are the things of another world represented to us in an earthly dress, in the Word, but because the weakness of our capacities in such matters, which the Lord is pleased to condescend unto, requires it. It being always supposed, that the things of the other world are in their kind more perfect than those by which they are represented. When heaven is represented to us under the notion of a city, with gates of pearl and the street of gold, we do not expect to find gold and pearls there, which are so mightily prized on earth, but something more excellent than the finest and most precious things in this world. When therefore, we hear of hell-fire, it is necessary we understand by it something more vehement, piercing, and tormenting, than any fire ever seen by our eyes. And here it is worth considering, that the torments of hell are held forth under several other notions than that of fire alone. And the reason of it is plain- namely, that hereby what of horror is lacking in

one notion of hell, is supplied by another.

Why is heaven's happiness represented under the various notions of a treasure, a paradise, a feast, a rest, and so forth; but that there is not one of these things sufficient to express it?

Even so, hell-torments are represented under the notion of 'fire' which the damned are cast into. A dreadful representation indeed, yet not sufficient to express the misery of the state of sinners in them!

Therefore, we hear also of 'the second death', for the damned in hell shall be ever dying. And the 'wine-press of the wrath of God', wherein they will be trodden in anger, trampled in the Lord's fury, pressed, broken and bruised, without end. And 'the worm that does not die', which shall eternally gnaw them. And 'a bottomless pit,' where they will be ever sinking.

It is not simply called 'a fire,' but the 'lake' of fire and brimstone, 'a lake of fire burning with brimstone'- which one can imagine nothing more dreadful.

Yet, because fire gives light; and light, as Solomon observes (Ecclesiastes 11:7), is sweet; there is no light there, but only darkness, utter darkness! For they must have an everlasting night, since nothing can be there which is in any measure comfortable or refreshing.

(c) Our fire cannot affect a spirit, but by way of sympathy with the body to which it is united. But hell-fire will not only pierce into the bodies, but also go directly into the souls of the damned, for it is 'prepared for the devil and his angels,' those wicked spirits, whom no fire on earth can hurt.

Job complains heavily, under the chastisements of God's fatherly hand, saying, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinks up my spirit' (Job 6:4). But how will the spirits of the damned be pierced with the arrows of revenging justice! How will they be drunk up with the poison of the curse of these arrows!

How vehement must that fire be which pierces directly into the soul, and makes an everlasting burning in the spirit, the most lively and tender part of a man, wherein wounds or pains are most intolerable!

(d) The preparation of this fire proves the inexpressible vehemency and dreadfulness of it. The text calls it, 'prepared' yes, 'the prepared fire,' by way of eminence. As the three children were not cast into ordinary fire, but a fire prepared for a particular purpose which therefore was exceeding hot, the furnace being heated seven times more than ordinary, so the damned shall find in hell a prepared fire, the like to which was never prepared by human are.

It is a fire of God's own preparing- the product of infinite wisdom, with a particular purpose- to demonstrate the most strict and severe divine justice against sin; which may sufficiently evidence to us the inconceivably intenseness thereof.

God always acts in a peculiar way, becoming His infinite greatness, whether for or against the creature- therefore, as the things He has prepared for them that love Him are great and good beyond expression or conception, so one may conclude that the things He has prepared against those who hate Him are great and terrible beyond what men can either say or think of them! The pile of Tophet is 'fire and much wood;' the coals of that fire are 'coals of juniper,' a kind of wood

which, set on fire, burns most fiercely (Psalms 120:4); 'and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it' (Isaiah 30:33).

Fire is more or less violent, according to the substance of it, and the breath by which it is blown. What heart, then, can fully conceive the horror of coals of juniper, blown up with the breath of the Lord?

No, God Himself will be a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24) to the damned; intimately present, as a devouring fire, in their souls and bodies.

It is a fearful thing to fall into a fire, or to be shut up in a fiery furnace, on earth! But the terror of these vanishes, when we consider how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God, which is the lot of the damned! For 'Who shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' (Isaiah 33:14).

2. As to the second point proposed, namely, the properties of the fiery torments in hell–

(a) They will be universal torments, every part of the creature being tormented in that flame. When one is cast into a fiery furnace, the fire makes its way into the very heart, and leaves no member untouched.

What part, then, can have ease, when the damned 'swim' in a lake of fire, burning with brimstone? There will their bodies be tormented and scorched forever. And as they sinned, so shall they be tormented, in all the parts thereof, that they shall have no sound side to turn to- for what soundness or ease can there be to any part of that body, which being separated from God, and all refreshment from Him, is still in the pangs of the second death, ever dying, but never dead? But as the soul was chief in sinning, it will be chief in suffering too, being filled quite full of the wrath of a sin-avenging God. The damned shall be forever under the deepest impressions of God's vindictive justice against them- and this fire will melt their souls within them, like wax. Who knows the power of that wrath which had such an effect on the Mediator standing in the room of sinners (Psalms 22:14)- 'My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of me.' Their minds shall be filled with the terrible apprehensions of God's implacable wrath- and whatever they can think upon, past, present, or to come, will aggravate their torment and anguish. Their will shall be crossed in all things for evermore. As their will was ever contrary to the will of God's precepts, so God, in His dealing with them in the other world, shall have war with their will forever. What they would like to have, they shall not in the least obtain. But what they do not want, shall be bound upon them without remedy.

Hence, no pleasant affection shall ever spring up in their hearts any more; their love of comfort, joy, and delight, in any object whatever, shall be plucked up by the root. They will be filled with hatred, fury, and rage against God, themselves, and their fellow-creatures, whether happy in heaven, or miserable in hell, as they themselves are.

They will be sunk in sorrow, racked with anxiety, filled with horror, galled to the heart with fretting, and continually darted with despair- which will make them weep, gnash their teeth, and blaspheme forever.

'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 22:13). 'And there fell upon men a great hail out of

heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent- and men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great,.' (Revelation 16:21).

Conscience will be a worm to gnaw and prey upon them; remorse for their sins shall seize them and torment them forever, and they shall not be able to shake it off, as once they did; for 'in hell their worm does not die.' (Mark 9:44, Mark 9:46). Their memory will serve but to aggravate their torment and every new reflection will bring another pang of anguish (Luke 16:25), 'But Abraham said,' to the rich man in hell, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things.'

(b) The torments in hell are manifold. Imagine the case that a man were, at one and the same time, under the violence of the gout, stone, and whatever diseases and pains have ever met together in one body- the torment of such a one would be but light in comparison to the torments of the dammed.

For, as in hell there is an absence of all that is good and desirable, so there is the convergence of all evils there; since all the effects of sin and of the curse take their place in it, after the last judgment. (Revelation 20:14), 'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.'

There they will find a prison they can never escape out of; a lake of fire, where they will be ever swimming and burning; a pit, of which they will never find a bottom. The worm that does not die shall feed on them, as on bodies which are interred. The fire that is not quenched shall devour them, as dead bodies which are burned. Their eyes shall be kept in blackness of darkness, without the least comfortable gleam of light. Their ears shall be filled with frightful yellings of the infernal crew. They shall taste nothing but the sharpness of God's wrath, the dregs of the cup of His fury! The stench of the burning lake of brimstone will be the smell there. And they shall feel extreme pains for evermore.

(c) They will be most intense and vehement torments, causing 'weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 13:42, Matthew 22:13). They are represented to us under the notion of pangs in childbirth, which are very sharp and acute. So says the rich man in hell (Luke 16:24), 'I am tormented,' that is, as one in the pangs of child-bearing, 'in this flame.' Ah! dreadful pangs! Horrible travail, in which both soul and body are in pangs together! Helpless anguish, hopeless and endless! The word used for hell (Matthew 5:22), and in various other places of the New Testament, properly denotes the valley of Hinnom, the name being taken from the valley of the children of Hinnom, in which was Tophet (2 Kings 23:10), where idolaters offered their children to Moloch. This is said to have been a great bronze idol, with arms like a man's- which being heated by fire within it, the child was set in the burning arms of the idol. And, that the parent might not hear the shrieks of the child burning to death, they beat drums in the time of the horrible sacrifice; whence the place had the name of Tophet.

Thus the intenseness of the torments in hell are pointed out to us.

Some have endured grievous tortures on earth with surprising obstinacy and undaunted courage. But men's courage will fail them there, when they find themselves fallen into the hands of the living God- and no escape to be expected forever.

It is true, there will be degrees of torments in hell- 'It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida' (Matthew 11:21-22). But the least load of wrath there will be

insupportable; for how can the heart of the creature endure, or his hands be strong, when God Himself is a consuming fire to him? When the tares are bound in bundles for the fire, there will be "bundles" of covetous persons, of drunkards, profane sweaters, unclean persons, formal hypocrites, unbelievers, and despisers of the Gospel, and the like. The several "bundles" being cast into hell-fire, some will burn more vehemently than others, according as their sins have been more heinous than those of others- a fiercer flame shall seize the bundle of the profane, than the bundle of unsanctified moralists. The furnace will be hotter to those who have sinned against light, than to those who lived in darkness (Luke 12:47-48), "That servant which knew his lord's will, and did not do it, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.' But the sentence common to them all- (Matthew 13:30), 'Bind them in bundles to burn them,' speaks of the great vehemency and fierceness of the lowest degree of torment in hell.

(d) The torments will be uninterrupted. There is no intermission there- no ease, no, not for a moment. They 'shall be tormented day and night forever and ever'. Few are so troubled in this world, but sometimes they get rest. But the damned shall get none. They took their rest in the time appointed of God for their labor.

Storms are rarely seen, without some space between the showers. But there is no intermission in the storm that falls on the wicked in hell. There, deep will be calling unto deep, and the waves of wrath continually rolling over them. There, the heavens will be always black to them, and they shall have a perpetual night, but no rest (Revelation 14:11), "They have no rest day nor night.'

(e) They will be unpitied. The punishments inflicted on the greatest malefactors on earth draw forth some compassion from the spectators. But the damned shall have none to pity them.

God will not pity them, but laugh at their calamity (Proverbs 1:26). The blessed company in heaven shall rejoice in the execution of God's righteous judgment, and sing while their smoke rises up forever and ever (Revelation 19:3), 'And again they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke rose up forever and ever.' No compassion can be expected from the devil and his angels, who delight in the ruin of the children of men, and are and will be forever void of pity. Neither will one person pity another there, where every one is weeping and gnashing his teeth, under his own insupportable anguish and pain.

There, natural affection will be extinguished- parents will not love their children, nor children their parents; the mother will not pity the daughter in these flames, nor will the daughter pity the mother; the son will show no regard to his father there, nor the servant to his master, where every one will be groaning under his own torment.

(f) To complete their misery, their torments shall be eternal! 'And the smoke of their torments ascends up forever and ever.' Ah! what a frightful case is this- to be tormented in the whole body and soul, and that not with one kind of torment, but many; all of these most acute, and all this without any intermission, and without pity from any!

What heart can conceive those things without horror? Nevertheless, if this most miserable case were at length to have an end, that would afford some comfort. But the torments of the damned will have no end!

Application–

1. Learn from this the evil of sin. It is a stream that will carry down the sinner, until he is swallowed up in the ocean of wrath! The pleasures of sin are bought too dear, at the rate of everlasting burnings. What did the rich man's purple clothing and sumptuous food avail him, when in hell he was encircled by purple flames, and could not have a drop of water to cool his tongue?

Alas! that men should indulge themselves in sin which will bring such bitterness in the end! That they should drink so greedily of the poisonous cup, and hug that serpent in their bosom that will sting them to the heart!

2. What a God He is with whom we have to do! What hatred He bears to sin, and how severely He punishes it!

Know that the Lord is most just, as well as most merciful, but do not think that He is such an one as you are! Away with the fatal mistake before it be too late (Psalms 50:21-22), "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself- but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." The fire prepared for the devil and his angels, dark as it is, will discover God to be a severe revenger of sin. See the absolute necessity of fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; and also the same necessity of repentance, and holiness of heart and life. The avenger of blood is pursuing you, O sinner! Haste and escape to the city of refuge! Wash now in the fountain of the Mediator's blood, that you may not perish in the lake of fire! Open your heart to Him, lest the pit close its mouth on you! Leave your sins, else they will ruin you; kill them, else they will be your death forever!

Let not the terror of hell-fire put you upon hardening your heart more, as it may do, if you entertain that wicked thought, 'There is no hope' (Jeremiah 2:25), which, perhaps, is more common among the hearers of the gospel than many are aware of. But there is hope for the worst of sinners, who will come to Jesus Christ!

If there are no good qualifications in you, as certainly there can be none in a sinful man, none in any man but what are received from Christ; know that He has not suspended your welcome on any good qualifications- take Him and His salvation freely offered to all to whom the Gospel comes. 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Revelation 22:17). 'Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37).

It is true, you are a sinful creature, and cannot repent; you are unholy, and cannot make yourself holy. No, you have attempted to repent, to forsake sin, and to be holy, but still failed of repentance, reformation, and holiness; and therefore, you said- 'There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Truly, no wonder that the success has not answered your expectation, since you have always begun your work amiss. But first of all honor God, by believing the testimony He has given of His Son, namely, that eternal life is in Him- and honor the Son of God, by believing in Him, that is- embracing and falling in with the free offer of Christ, and of His salvation from sin and from wrath, made to you in the Gospel; trusting in Him confidently for righteousness to your justification, and also for sanctification; seeing 'of God he is made unto us' both 'righteousness and sanctification' (1 Corinthians 1:30). Then, if you have as much credit to give to the Word of God, as you would allow to the word of an honest man, offering you a gift, and

saying, ’Take it, and it is yours’; you may believe that God is your God, Christ is yours, His salvation is yours, your sins are pardoned, you have strength in Him for repentance and for holiness; for all these are made over to you in the free offer of the gospel.

Believing on the Son of God, you are justified, the curse is removed. But while it lies upon you, how is it possible you should bring forth the fruits of holiness? But, if the curse is removed, that death which seized on you with the first Adam, according to the threatening (Genesis 2:17), is taken away. In consequence of which, you will find the bands of wickedness, now holding you fast in impenitence, broken asunder, as also the bands of death. So as you will be able to repent indeed from the heart- you will find the spirit of life returned to your soul, on whose departure that death ensued, so as thenceforth you will be enabled to live unto righteousness. No man’s case is so bad, but it may be mended this way, in time, to be perfectly right in eternity. And no man’s case is so good, but, another way being taken, it will be ruined for time and eternity too.

III. THE DAMNED SHALL HAVE THE SOCIETY OF DEVILS IN THEIR MISERABLE STATE IN HELL–

For they must depart into "fire prepared for the devil and his angels." O horrible company! O frightful association! Who would choose to dwell in a palace haunted by devils? To be confined to the most pleasant spot of earth, with the devil and his infernal furies, would be a most terrible confinement. How would men’s hearts fail them, and their hair stand up, finding themselves environed with the hellish crew!

But, ah! how much more terrible must it be, to be cast with the devils into one fire, locked up with them in one dungeon, shut up with them in one pit! To be closed up in a den of roaring lions, girded about with serpents, surrounded with venomous asps, and to have the heart eaten out by vipers, altogether and at once, is a comparison too low to show the misery of the damned, shut up in hell with the devil and his angels!

They go about now as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour. But then they shall be confined in their den with their prey. They shall be filled with the wrath of God, and receive the full torment (Matthew 8:29), which they tremble in expectation of (James 2:19), being cast into the fire prepared for them.

How will these lions roar and tear! How will these serpents hiss! These dragons cast out fire! What horrible anguish will seize the damned, finding themselves in the lake of fire with the devil who deceived them! drawn there with the silken cords of temptation by these wicked spirits! and bound with them in everlasting chains under darkness!

’And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.’ (Revelation 20:10)

O that men would consider this in time, renounce the devil and his lusts, and join themselves to the Lord in faith and holiness! Why should men choose such company in this world, and delight in such society, as they would not desire to associate with in the next world? Those who like not the company of the saints on earth will get none of it in eternity; but, as godless company is their delight now, they will afterwards get enough of it, when they have eternity to pass in the roaring and blaspheming society of devils and reprobates in hell! Let those who use to invocate the devil

to take them, soberly consider that the company so often invited will be terrible at last, when come.

IV. THE ETERNITY OF THE WHOLE–

And, Lastly, Let us consider the eternity of the whole, the everlasting continuance of the miserable state of the damned in hell.

A. If I could, I would show WHAT ETERNITY IS, I mean, the creature's eternity. But who can measure the waters of the ocean? Or who can tell you the days, years, and ages of eternity, which are infinitely more than the drops of the ocean?

None can comprehend eternity but the eternal God. Eternity is an ocean whereof we shall never see the shore; it is a deep where we can find no bottom; a labyrinth from whence we cannot extricate ourselves, and where we shall ever lose the door. There are two things we may say of it–

1. It has a beginning. God's eternity has no beginning, but the creature's has. Once there was no lake of fire; and those who have been there for some hundreds of years, were once in time, as we now are.

2. It shall never have an end. The first who entered into the eternity of woe is as far from the end of it as the last who shall go there will be at his entry. They who have launched out furthest into that ocean are as far from land as they were the first moment they went into it- and, thousands of ages after this they will be as far from it as ever. Wherefore eternity, which is before us, is a duration that has a beginning but no end.

It is a beginning without a middle, a beginning without an end. After millions of years passed in it, still it is beginning! God's wrath in hell will ever be the wrath to come! There is no middle in eternity! When millions of ages are past in eternity, what is past bears no proportion to what is to come- no, not so much as one drop of water, falling from the tip of one's finger, as compared to all the waters of the ocean.

There is no end of it- while God is, it shall be. It is an entry without an end to it, a continual succession of ages, a glass always running, which shall never run out.

Observe the continual succession of hours, days, months, and years, how one still follows upon another; and think of eternity, wherein there is a continual succession without end. When you go out at night and behold the stars of heaven, how they cannot be numbered for multitude, think of the ages of eternity; consider also, there is a certain definite number of stars, but no number of the ages of eternity. When you see water running in a river, think how vain a thing it would be to sit down by it, and wait until it should run out, that you may pass over; observe how new water still succeeds to that which passes by you- and therein you have an image of eternity, which is a river that never dries up.

They who wear rings have an image of eternity on their fingers; and they who handle the wheel have an emblem of eternity before them- for to whichever part of the ring or wheel we look, one will still see another part beyond it; and on whatever moment of eternity you meditate, there is still another beyond it. When you are abroad in the fields, and behold the blades of grass on the earth, which no man can reckon, think with yourselves, that, were as many thousands of years to come, as there are blades of grass on the ground, even those would have an end at length; but eternity

will have none. When you look to a mountain, imagine in your hearts how long would it be before that mountain should be removed by a little bird coming but once every thousand years, and carrying away but one grain of the dust of it- the mountain would at length be removed that way, and brought to an end; but eternity will never end.

Suppose this with respect to all the mountains of the earth, no, with respect to the whole globe itself- the grains of dust of which the whole of it is made up are not infinite; and therefore the last grain would, at length, come to be carried away, as seen above- yet eternity would be, in effect, but beginning.

These are some crude emblems of eternity! And now add misery and woe to this eternity, what tongue can express it? What heart can conceive it? In what balance can that misery and that woe be weighed?

B. Let us take A VIEW OF WHAT IS ETERNAL, IN THE STATE OF THE DAMNED IN HELL- Whatever is included in the fearful torments of their state, is everlasting- therefore all the doleful ingredients of their miserable state will be everlasting-they will never end. The text expressly declares the fire, into which they must depart, to be everlasting fire. And our Lord elsewhere tells us, that in hell, the fire never shall be quenched (Mark 9:43). He had an eye to the valley of Hinnom, in which, besides the before mentioned fire for burning the children to Molech, there was also another fire burning continually, to consume the dead carcasses and filth of Jerusalem- so the Scripture, representing hell-fire by the fire of that valley, speaks of it not only to be most intense, but also everlasting. Seeing, then, the damned must depart, as cursed ones, into everlasting fire, it is evident that–

(1) The damned themselves shall be eternal; they will have a being for ever, and will never be substantially destroyed or annihilated. To what end is the fire eternal, if those who are cast into it be not eternally in it? It is plain, the everlasting continuance of the fire is an aggravation of the misery of the damned. But, surely, if they be annihilated, or substantially destroyed, it would be all the same to them, whether the fire be everlasting or not. No, but they depart into everlasting fire, to be everlastingly punished in it. (Matthew 25:46), 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment.' Thus the execution of the sentence is a certain discovery of the meaning of it. The worm, that dies not, must have a subject to live in- they, who shall have no rest, day nor night (Revelation 14:11), but shall be 'tormented day and night forever and ever' (Revelation 20:10). They will certainly have a being for ever and ever, and not be brought into a state of eternal rest in annihilation.

Destroyed indeed they shall be- but their destruction will be an everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9); a destruction of their well-being, but not of their being. What is destroyed is not therefore annihilated- 'Are you come to destroy us?' said the devil unto Jesus Christ (Luke 4:34). The devils are afraid of torment, not of annihilation (Matthew 8:29), 'Are you come here to torment us before the time?' The state of the damned is indeed a state of death; but such a death it is as is opposite only to a happy life, as is clear from other notions of their state, which necessarily include eternal existence. As they who are dead in sin are dead to God and holiness, yet alive to sin- so dying in hell they live, but separated from God and His favor, in which is life (Psalms 30:5). They shall ever be under the pangs of death; ever dying, but never dead, or absolutely void of life.

How desirable would such a death be to them! But it will flee from them forever. Could they kill one another there, or could they, with their own hands, tear themselves into lifeless pieces, their misery would quickly be at an end. But there they must live, whom chose death and refused life; for there death lives, and the end ever begins.

(2) The curse shall lie upon them eternally, as the everlasting chain to hold them in the everlasting fire- a chain that shall never be loosed, being fixed forever about them by the dreadful sentence of the eternal judgment. This chain, which spurns the united force of devils held fast by it, is too strong to be broken by men, who being solemnly anathematized and devoted to destruction., can never be recovered to any other use.

(3) Their punishment shall be eternal. 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment.' They will be forever separated from God and Christ, and from the society of the holy angels and saints, between them an impassable gulf will be fixed- 'And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

They shall forever have the horrible society of the devil and his angels. There will be no change of company forever in that region of darkness. Their torment in the fire will be everlasting- they must live forever in it.

Several authors, both ancient and modern, tell us of earth-flax, or salamander's hairs, that cloth made of it, being cast into the fire, is so far from being burnt or consumed, that it is only made clean thereby, as other things are by washing. But however that is, it is certain the damned shall be tormented forever and ever in hell-fire, and not substantially destroyed (Revelation 20:10). And indeed nothing is annihilated by fire, but only dissolved. Of whatever nature hell-fire is, no question, the same God who kept the bodies of the three children from burning in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, can also keep the bodies of the damned from any such dissolution by hell-fire as may infer privation of life.

(4) Their knowledge and 'sense' of their misery shall be eternal, and they shall assuredly know that it will be eternal. How desirable would it be to them to have their 'sense' forever locked up, and to lose the consciousness of their own misery-as one may rationally suppose it to fare at length with some, in the punishment of death inflicted on them on earth, and as it is with some insane people; but that agrees not with the notion of torment forever and ever, nor the worm that dies not.

No, they will ever have a lively feeling of their misery, and strongest impressions of the wrath of God against them. And that dreadful intimation of the eternity of their punishment, made to them by their Judge, in their sentence, will fix such impressions of the 'eternity of their miserable state' upon their minds, as they will never be able to lay it aside; but will continue with them evermore, to complete their misery. This will fill them with everlasting despair; a most tormenting passion, which will continually rend their hearts, as it were, in a thousand pieces. To see floods of wrath ever coming, and never to cease; to be forever in torment, and to know that there shall never, never be a release, will be the topstone put on the misery of the damned!

If hope deferred makes the heart sick' (Proverbs 13:12), how killing will it be for hope to be rooted up, slain outright, and buried forever out of the creature's sight! This will fill them with hatred and rage against God, their known irreconcilable enemy; and under it, they will roar forever, like wild

bulls in a net, and fill the pit with blasphemies evermore.

I might here show the reasonableness of the eternity of the punishment of the damned- but, having already spoken of it, in vindicating the justice of God, in His subjecting men in their natural state to eternal wrath, I only remind you of three things–

1. The infinite dignity of the party offended by sin requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted for the vindication of His honor, since the demerit of sin rises according to the dignity and excellence of the person against whom it is committed. The party offended is the great God, the chief good- the offender a vile worm; in respect to perfection, infinitely distant from God, to whom he is indebted for all the good that he ever had. This then requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted on the sinner; which, since it cannot in him be infinite in value, must needs be infinite in duration, that is to say, eternal.

Sin is a kind of infinite evil, as it wrongs an infinite God; and the guilt and defilement of it is never taken away, but endures forever, unless the Lord Himself in mercy remove it.

God, who is offended, is eternal; His being never comes to an end- the sinful soul is immortal, and the man shall live forever. The sinner, being without strength (Romans 5:6) to expiate his guilt, can never put away the offence; therefore it ever remains, unless the Lord put it away Himself, as in the elect, by His Son's blood.

Therefore the party offended, the offender, and the offence, forever remaining, the punishment cannot but be eternal!

2. The sinner would have continued the course of his provocations against God forever without end, if God had not put a check to it by death. As long as they were capable of acting against Him in this world, they did it- and therefore justly will He act against them, while He is; that is, forever.

God, who judges of the will, intents, and inclinations of the heart, may justly do against sinners, in punishing, as they would have done against Him in sinning.

3. Though I put not the stress of the matter here, yet it is just and reasonable that the damned suffer eternally, since they will sin eternally in hell, gnashing their teeth (Matthew 8:12), under their pain, in rage, envy, and grudge (compare Acts 7:54; Psalms 112:10; Luke 13:28), and blaspheming God there (Revelation 16:21) while they are driven away in their wickedness (Proverbs 14:32). That the wicked be punished for their wickedness is just, and it is in no way inconsistent with justice that the being of the creature be continued forever- wherefore it is just that the damned, continuing wicked eternally, do suffer eternally for their wickedness. The misery, under which they sin, can neither free them from the debt of obedience, nor excuse their sinning and make it blameless. The creature, as a creature, is bound unto obedience to his Creator; and no punishment inflicted on him can free him from it, any more than the malefactor's prison, irons, whipping, and the like, set him at liberty again, to commit the crimes for which he is imprisoned or whipped.

Neither can the torments of the dammed excuse, or make blameless, their horrible sinning under them, any more than exquisite pains, inflicted upon men on earth, can excuse their murmuring, fretting, and blaspheming against God under them.

It is not the wrath of God, but their own wicked nature, that is the true cause of their sinning under it; for the holy Jesus bore the wrath of God without so much as one unbecoming thought of God, and far less any one unbecoming word.

01.04f Hell cont'd

Hell cont’d

Application

1. Here is a measuring rod- O that men would apply it! Apply it to your own time in this world, and you will find your time to be very short. A prospect of much time to come, proves the ruin of many souls. Men will be reckoning their time by ’years’, like that rich man (Luke 12:19-20), when, it may be, there are not many ’hours’ of it to run. But reckon as you will, laying your time to the measuring reed of eternity, you will see your age is as nothing. What a small and inconsiderable point is sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, in respect of eternity! Compared with eternity, there is a greater disproportion than between a hair’s breadth and the circumference of the whole earth.

Why do we then sleep in such a short day, while we are in danger of losing rest through the long night of eternity?

Apply it to your endeavors for salvation, and they will be found very scanty. When men are pressed to diligence in their salvation work, they are ready to say, ’To what purpose is this waste?’

Alas! if it were to be judged by our diligence, what end it is that we have in view; as to the most part of us, no man could thereby conjecture that we have eternity in view. If we duly considered eternity, we could not but conclude, that, to leave no appointed means of God untried until we get our salvation secured- to refuse rest or comfort in anything, until we are sheltered under the wings of the Mediator- to pursue our great interest with the utmost vigor to cut off lusts dear as right hands and right eyes- to set our faces resolutely against all difficulties- and fight our way through all opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh. These are, all of them together, little enough for eternity.

2. Here is a balance of the sanctuary, by which we may understand the lightness of what is falsely thought weighty; and the weight of some things, by many reckoned to be very light.

Some things seem very weighty, which, weighed in this balance, will be found very light–

(a) Weigh the world, and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and the whole will be found light in the balance of eternity.

Weigh herein all worldly profits, gains, and advantages; and you will quickly see, that a thousand worlds will not compensate for an eternity of woe! ’For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ (Matthew 16:26). Weigh the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, with the fire that is everlasting, and you show yourself to be fools and madmen, to run the hazard of losing the one for the other.

(b) Weigh your afflictions in this balance, and you will find the heaviest of them very light, in respect of the weight of eternal anguish. Impatience under affliction, especially when worldly troubles so embitter men’s spirits that they cannot relish the glad tidings of the Gospel, speaks

great regardlessness of eternity. As a small and inconsiderable loss will be very little at heart with him who sees himself in danger of losing his whole estate; so troubles in the world will appear but light to him who has a lively view of eternity. Such a one will stoop and take up his cross, whatever it be, thinking it enough to escape eternal wrath.

(c) Weigh the most difficult and uneasy duties of religion here, and you will no more reckon the yoke of Christ insupportable.

Repentance and bitter mourning for sin, on earth, are very light in comparison of eternal weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth in hell! To wrestle with God in prayer, weeping and making supplication for the blessing in time, is far easier than to lie under the curse through all eternity! Mortification of the most beloved lust is a light thing in comparison with the second death in hell!

(d) Weigh your convictions in this balance. O how heavy do those lie upon many until they get them shaken off! They are not disposed to continue with them, but strive to get clear of them as of a mighty burden. But the worm of a bad conscience will neither die nor sleep in hell, though we may now lull it asleep for a time. And certainly it is easier to entertain the sharpest convictions in this life, so that they lead us to Christ, than to have them fixed forever in the conscience, and to be in hell totally and finally separated from Him.

But, on the other hand, weigh sin in this balance, and, though now it seems but a light thing to you, you will find it a weight sufficient to turn up an eternal weight of wrath upon you.

Even idle words, vain thoughts, and unprofitable actions, weighed in this balance, and considered as following the sinner into eternity, will each of them be heavier than the sand of the sea! Time idly spent will make a weary eternity!

Now is your seedtime; thoughts, words, and actions, are the seed sown, eternity is the harvest. Though the seed now lies under the clod, disregarded by most men, even the least grain shall spring up at length; and the fruit will be according to the seed (Galatians 6:8), 'For he that sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, (that is, destruction), but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

Weigh in this balance your time and opportunities of grace and salvation, and you will find them very weighty. Precious time and seasons of grace, Sabbaths, communions, prayers, sermons, and the like, are by many, now-a-days made light of; but the day is coming when one of these will be reckoned more valuable than a thousand worlds by those who now have the least value for them! When they are gone forever, and the loss cannot be retrieved, those will see the worth of them who will not now see it.

3. Be warned and stirred up to flee from the wrath to come! Mind eternity, and closely ply the work of your salvation. What are you doing, while you are not so doing? Is heaven a fable, or hell a false alarm? Must we live eternally, and shall we be at no more pains to escape everlasting misery? Will faint wishes take the kingdom of heaven by force? Will such drowsy endeavors as most men satisfy themselves with, be accounted fleeing from the wrath to come?

You who have already fled to Christ, up, and be doing. You who have begun the work, go on and loiter not, but 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling'. 'Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'. Remember you are not yet ascended into heaven; you are but in your

middle state. The everlasting arms have drawn you out of the gulf of wrath you were plunged into, in your natural state; they are still underneath you, that you can never fall down into it again. Nevertheless, you have not yet got up to the top of the rock; the deep below you is frightful- look at it, and hasten your ascent.

You who are yet in your sinful state, lift up your eyes and take a view of the eternal state. Arise, you profane persons, you ignorant ones, you formal hypocrites, strangers to the power of godliness, and flee from the wrath to come!

Let not the young venture to delay a moment longer, nor the old put off this work any more- 'Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;' lest He swear in His wrath that you shall never enter into His rest.

It is no time to linger in a state of sin, as in Sodom, when fire and brimstone are coming down on it from the Lord. Take warning in time. They who are in hell are not troubled with such warnings, but are enraged against themselves, because they slighted the warning when they had it.

Consider, I beg you, how uneasy it is to lie one whole night on a soft bed in perfect health, when we gladly would have sleep but cannot get it, sleep being departed from us. How often do we in that case, wish for rest! how full of tossings to and fro! But ah! how dreadful must it be to lie in sorrow, wrapped up in scorching flames throughout eternity, in that place where they have no rest day nor night!

How terrible would it be to live under violent pains of the cholic or stone for forty or sixty years together without any intermission! Yet that is but a very small thing compared with eternal separation from God, the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched!

Eternity is an awful thought! O long, long endless eternity! But will not every moment in eternity of woe seem a month, and every hour a year, in that most wretched and desperate condition? Hence, 'ever and ever', as it were, a double eternity. The sick man in the night, tossing to and fro on his bed, says it will never be day, and complains that his pain ever continues- it never, never abates. Are these 'petty time-eternities', which men form to themselves in their own imaginations, so very grievous? Alas! then, how grievous, how utterly insupportable, must a real eternity of woe, and all manner of miseries, be!

There will be space enough there to reflect on all the ills of our heart and life, which we cannot get time to think of now; and to see that all that was said of the impenitent sinner's hazard was true, and that the half was not told. There will be space enough in eternity to carry on delayed repentance, to lament one's follies when it is too late; and in a state past remedy to speak forth these fruitless wishes- O that I had never been born! that the womb had been my grave, and I had never seen the sun!

O that I had taken warning in time, and fled from this wrath while the door of mercy was standing open to me! O that I had never heard the Gospel, that I had lived in some corner of the world where a Savior and the great salvation were not once named! But all in vain. What is done cannot be undone; the opportunity is lost, and can never be retrieved; time is gone, and can never be recalled. Therefore, improve time while you have it, and do not willfully ruin yourself by stopping your ear to the Gospel call. And now, if you would be saved from the wrath to come, and never go

into this place of torment, take no rest in your natural state; believe the sinfulness and misery of it, and labor to get out of it quickly, fleeing unto Jesus Christ by faith.

Sin in you is the seed of hell- and if the guilt and reigning power of it be not removed in time, they will bring you to the second death in eternity.

There is no way to get them removed, but by receiving Christ as He is offered in the Gospel, for justification and sanctification- and He is now offered to you with all His salvation (Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:17), 'And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that hears say, Come; and let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of peace, and the fountain of holiness- He it is who delivers us from the wrath to come. 'There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Romans 8:1). The terrors of hell, as well as the joys of heaven, are set before you, to stir you up to a cordial receiving of Him, with all His salvation; and to incline you to the way of faith and holiness, in which alone you can escape the everlasting fire. May the Lord Himself make them effectual to that end!

02.00. Of God

Of God By Thomas Boston ---------- 1. Of God and His Perfections 2. Of the Holy Trinity 3. Of the Providence of God 4. Of the Unity of God 5. Of the Work of Creation

02.01. Of God and His Perfections

Simonides, a heathen poet, being asked by Riero king of Syracuse, What is God? desired a day to think upon it; and when that day was at an end, he desired two days; and when these were past, he desired four days. Thus he continued to double the number of days in which he desired to think of God, ere he would give an answer. Upon which the king expressing his surprise at his behavior, asked him, What he meant by this? To which the poet answered, “The more I think of God, he is still the more dark and unknown to me. Indeed no wonder that he made such an answer; for he that would tell what God is in a measure suitable to his excellency and glory, had need to know God even as he is known of him, which is not competent to any man upon earth. Agur puzzles the whole creation with that sublime question, What is his name? (Proverbs 30:4). But though it is impossible in our present state to know God perfectly, seeing he is incomprehensible; yet so much of him is revealed in the scriptures as is necessary for us to know in order to our salvation. The text tells us, and it should be remembered, that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and who only can reveal him, is here the speaker, that God is a Spirit. It is but little of the nature of spirits that we, who dwell in tabernacles of clay, are so intimately connected with flesh and blood, and so naturally impressed with sensible objects, can know. We cannot fully understand what our own spirits or souls are; and less do we know of the nature of angels, who are of a superior nature to us; and far less can we know of the spiritual nature of the Divine Being, which is utterly incomprehensible by men or angels. However, as all our ideas begin at what is infinite, in considering the nature of spirits, so we are led to conceive of God as infinitely more perfect than any finite spirit”.

All we can know of spirits is,

1. That a spirit is the most perfect and excellent of beings, more excellent than the body, or anything that is purely material.

2. That a spirit is in its own nature immortal, having nothing in its frame and constitution tending; to dissolution or corruption.

3. That a spirit is capable of understanding, willing, and putting forth actions agreeable to its nature, which no other being can do. Now these conceptions of the nature of spirits lead us to conceive of God,

1. As a being that is more perfect and excellent than all other spirits and beings. Hence he is said to be incorruptible, (Romans 1:23); immortal and invisible, (1 Timothy 1:17). He has understandings and will; and so we conceive of him as the creator and governor of all things; which he could not be, if he were not an intelligent and sovereign spirit.

2. Though angels and the souls of men are spirits, yet their excellency is only comparative, that is, they excel the best of all material beings in their nature and properties. But God, as a spirit, is infinitely more excellent than all material beings, and all created spirits. Their perfections are derived from him; and therefore he is called “the Father of spirits,” (Hebrews 12:9) and “the God of

the spirits of all flesh," (Numbers 16:22); and his perfections are underived; and he is independently immortal. Hence it is said of him, that "he only hath immortality," (1 Timothy 6:16). He is an infinite spirit; and it can be said of none but him, that "his understanding is Infinite," (Psalms 147:5).

Now, a spirit is an immaterial substance, (Luke 24:39); and seeing whatever God is, he is infinitely perfect in it, he is a most pure spirit. Hence we may infer,

1. That God has no body nor bodily parts. Objection: How then are eyes, ears, hands, face, and the like, attributed in scripture to God? Answer: They are attributed to him not properly, but figuratively; they are spoken of him after the manner of men, in condescension to our weakness; but we are to understand them after a sort becoming the Divine Majesty. We are to consider what such bodily parts serve us for, as our eyes for discerning and knowing, our arms for strength, our hands for action, &c. and we are to conceive these things to be in God infinitely, which these parts serve for in us. Thus, when eyes and ears are ascribed to God they signify his omniscience; his hands denote his power, and his face the manifestation of his love and favor.

2. That God is invisible, and cannot be seen with the eyes of the body, no not in heaven; for the glorified body is still a body, and God a spirit, which is no object of the eyes, more than sound, taste, smell, &c. (1 Timothy 1:17).

3. That God is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits; and can communicate himself, and apply those things to them, which only can render them happy, as he is the God and Father of our spirits.

4. That it is sinful and dishonorable to God, either to make images or pictures of him without us, or to have any image of him in our minds, which our unruly imagination is apt to frame to itself, especially in prayer. For God is the object of our understanding, not of our imagination. God expressly prohibited Israel to frame any similitude or resemblance of him, and tells them, that they had not the least pretence for so doing, inasmuch as they "saw no similitude of him, when he spake to them in Horeb," (Deuteronomy 4:12, Deuteronomy 4:15-16). And says the prophet, "To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isaiah 40:18). We cannot form an imaginary idea, of our own souls or spirits, which are absolutely invisible to us, and far less of him who is the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see. Therefore to frame a picture or an idea of what is invisible, is highly absurd and impracticable: nay, it is gross idolatry, prohibited in the second commandment.

5. That externals in worship are of little value with God, who is a spirit, and requires the heart. They who would be accepted of God must worship him in spirit and in truth, that is, from an apprehension and saving knowledge of what he is in Christ to poor sinners. And this saving knowledge of God in Christ is attainable in this life: for it is the matter of the divine promise, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord," (Jeremiah 24:7). "it is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God," (John 6:45). And therefore it should be most earnestly and assiduously sought after by us, as, unless we attain to it, me must perish for ever. That we may know what sort of a spirit God is, we must consider his attributes, which we gather from his word and works, and that two ways:

1. By denying of, and removing from God, in our minds, all imperfection which is in the creatures, (Acts 17:29). And thus we come to the knowledge of his incommunicable attributes, so called because there is no shadow or vestige of them in the creatures, such as infinity, eternity, unchangeableness.

2. By attributing unto him, by way, of eminency, whatever is excellent in the creatures, seeing he is the fountain of all perfection in them, (Psalms 94:9). And thus we have his communicable attributes, whereof there are some vestiges and small scantlings in the creature, as being, wisdom, power, &c. amongst which his spirituality is to be reckoned.

Now, both these sorts of attributes in God are not qualities in him distinct from himself, but they are God himself. God's infinity is God himself, his wisdom is himself; he is wisdom, goodness, (1 John 1:5). Neither are these attributes so many different things in God; but they are each of them God himself: for God swears by himself, (Hebrews 6:19); yet he swears by his holiness, (Amos 4:2). He creates by himself, (Isaiah 44:24); yet he creates by his power, (Romans 1:20). Therefore God's attributes are God himself. Neither are these attributes separable from one another; for though we, through weakness, must think and speak of them separately, yet they are truly but the one infinite perfection of the divine nature, which cannot be separated therefrom, without denying that he is an infinitely perfect being.

We have said that God is a spirit; but angels and the souls of men are spirits too. What then is the difference between them? Why, God is an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable spirit; but angels and souls are but finite, were not from eternity, and are changeable spirits. Now, these three, infinity, eternity, and immutability, are God's incommunicable attributes, Which we are next to explain.

First, God is infinite. Infinity is the having no bounds or limits within which a thing is contained. God then is infinite, i.e. he is whatsoever he is without bounds, limits, or measure; "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). We cannot define the presence of God by any certain place, so as to say, Here he is, but not there; nor by any limits, so as to say, Thus far his being reacheth, and no further: but he is everywhere present, after a most inconceivable manner, even in the deepest darkness, and the closest recesses of privacy. He fills all the innumerable spaces that we can imagine beyond this visible world, and infinitely more than we can imagine.

Now God is infinite,

(1.) In respect of his being: for of his nature our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conception. This lies hid in rays of such bright and radiant glory, as must for ever dazzle the eyes of those who attempt to look into it.

(2.) In respect of place; and therefore he is everywhere present: "Can any man hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord," (Jeremiah 23:24).

(3.) In respect of time and duration: for the ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, "nor the number of his years searched out," (Job 36:26).

(4.) In respect of all his communicable attributes. Thus the depth of his wisdom cannot be fathomed: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33). “His greatness is unsearchable,” (Psalms 145:3). The extent of his power cannot be reached: “The thunder of his power who can understand” (Job 26:14). We cannot understand his powerful thunder, one of the lowest displays of his majesty in our region, much less the utmost extent and force of his power, in its terrible effects, especially the power of his anger: “God is great, and we know him not.” The treasures of the divine goodness cannot be inventoried: “O how great is thy goodness (says the Psalmist), which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which then hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!” (Psalms 31:19). The brightness of God’s glory cannot be described; as a full discovery of it would quite overpower the faculties of any mortal in this imperfect state: for man is weak and unworthy of it, weak and could not bear it, guilty and could not but dread it: and therefore God “holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it,” (Job 26:9). With what propriety, then did he say to Moses, “Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live!” (Exodus 33:20). That God is infinite, is evident from the natural notions and dictates of the human mind. Hence the heathens, by the light of nature, attributed this perfection to the Divine Being. Thus one philosopher pronounced him to be a circle whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is no where; which another philosopher thus expressed in clearer terms, God is included in no place and excluded from none. Which way soever ye turn, says Seneca, ye may take notice of God meeting you; for nothing is void of him: he himself fills all his works, and is present with the whole creation. Remarkable also is the expression of the prince of Latin poets, Jovis omnia Plena, “All things are full of God.” This also appears from several passages of scripture; “The Lord is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath,” Deuteronomy 4:39. “The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee,” (1 Kings 8:27) says Solomon in his prayer to God at the dedication of the temple. (See also Psalms 139:4; Jeremiah 23:23-24). Again, if God were not infinite and immense, many gross absurdities would follow from the contrary notion; such as, it is inconsistent with his universal providence over the world, by which all things are preserved. “In him we live, move and have our being,” (Acts 17:27). As his providence is over all, his essence must be equally diffusive. It is inconsistent with his supreme perfection. No perfection can be wanting in God: and therefore a limited essence, which is an imperfection, cannot be attributed to him. It is also inconsistent with his immutability: For if he move and recede from one place to another, would he not thereby be mutable while yet “with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” (James 1:17). Last of all, it would be inconsistent with his omnipotence. That God can do everything, is a notion settled in the minds of all; and his essence cannot be less or more confined than his power, and his power cannot be thought to extend farther than his essence. But some may be ready to say, Does not the scripture say, that God sits in heaven and dwells on high, that heaven is his throne; and does not the Lord’s prayer teach us to say, Our Father which art in heaven? Now, how can this agree with his infinity or immensity? I answer, God is indeed said to sit in heaven and to dwell on high; but he is no where said to dwell only in the heavens. It is the court of his majestic presence, not the prison of his essence. There is a three-fold presence of God: A glorious presence, which is peculiar to heaven: a gracious presence, which the saints enjoy on earth: and an essential presence, which is equally and alike in all places. Others may allege, that it is a disparagement to God, to say that he is essentially present in all places and with all creatures, even on the dunghill of the earth, and in

the sordid sink of hell with the devils and the damned. To this I would only say, that it is a gross misapprehension of God, and an unaccountable measuring of him by ourselves, to imagine that He is capable of being infected by anything below. For he is a pure and spotless being. Whatever is nauseous to our senses cannot affect him. Darkness is uncomfortable to us: but the darkness and the light are all one to him. Wickedness may hurt a man; but if we multiply our transgressions, what can we do unto him? (Job 35:6, Job 35:8). To deny the immensity of God, says one, because of ill-scented places, is to measure God rather by the nicety of sense, than by the sagacity of reason.

Secondly, The next incommunicable attribute of God is eternity. Hence he is called “the King eternal,” (1 Timothy 1:17). We find other things called eternal. But the eternity of all things besides God is only their having no end, though they had a beginning. Thus angels and the souls of men are eternal, because they shall never have an end. The covenant of grace is eternal, because the mercies of it shall last for ever. The gospel is eternal, because the effects of it shall never wear away. The redemption by Christ is eternal, for the same reason. And the last judgment is so, because the consequences will be everlasting. But the eternity of God is his being without beginning and without end: “From everlasting to everlasting thou art God,” (Psalms 90:2). He was from everlasting before time, and will remain unto everlasting when time shall be no more; without beginning of life or end of days.

Thirdly, The next incommunicable attribute of God is unchangeableness. God is immutable, that is, always the same, without any alteration. Hence it is Said, “With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” (James 1:17), and “I am the Lord, I change not,” (Malachi 3:6). God makes changes upon the creatures, but is liable to no change himself. Though he alters his dispensations, yet not his nature; but, by one pure and constant act of his will and power, effects what changes he pleases. He is the same in all his perfections, constant to his intentions, steady to his purpose, unchangeably fixed and persevering in all his decrees and resolutions. When God is said to repent in scripture, (Genesis 6:6; 1 Samuel 15:11) it denotes only a change of his outward conduct according to his infallible foresight and immutable will. He changes the way of his providential dealings according to the carriage and deportment of his creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence. For otherwise that is an eternal truth, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent,” (Numbers 23:19) and “The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent,” (1 Samuel 15:29).

Having taken a, short view of the incommunicable attributes of God, I proceed now to consider those that are called communicable, viz. his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Now these things are in the creatures indeed, but they are in them in a finite way; but God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in these perfections, which no creature is or can be.

First, There is his being which is his nature or essence and existence, which are but one thing in God. Creatures indeed have a being, but it is only a finite being, a being that has a beginning, a, changeable one, and that may have an end. But God’s being is an infinite being, eternal and unchangeable, Hence he calls himself, “I AM THAT I AM,” (Exodus 3:14). Hence we may infer,

1. That God is incomprehensible, and his essence infinite and unbounded, “His greatness is unsearchable,” (Psalms 145:3). It is not possible for a finite understanding to comprehend all that

is in God; but the nature of God is a boundless ocean that hath no shore: “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection.” (Job 11:7). And though God perfectly knows himself, that is because his understanding is infinite.

2. God is omnipresent and immense. He is present everywhere, but bounded no where, not only in respect of his virtue or influence, but of his essence. This clearly appears from the following passages; “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me,” (Psalms 139:7-10). “Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord,: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord,” (Jeremiah 23:23-24). “Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee,” (1 Kings 8:27). He is there where the thief is stealing, the unclean person gratifying his base lusts, &c. though they see him not, and think themselves secure when no other eyes see them.

3. There is no succession in the duration of God; for where there is not a first, there cannot be a second moment of duration; but God is eternal: And there can be no succession of time in God’s duration, if he be unchangeable; for that is a continual change. “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” (See 2 Peter 3:8).

4. God is independent, or self-sufficient. His being and perfections are underived, and not communicated to him, as all finite perfections are by him to the creature. This self-existence, or independence, is one of the highest glories of the divine nature, by which he is distinguished from all creatures, who live, move, and have their being in and from him. Therefore all our springs are in him, all that we enjoy or hope for is from him; and we should be entirely devoted to his service and honor.

5. Lastly, This doctrine affords full breasts of consolation to the godly, who have an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable friend, who will never leave nor forsake them, but render them completely blessed at last, and confirm them in that happy state forever. And here is unspeakable terror to those whose enemy this great and eternal God is; for being his enemies, and dying in their rebellion, they shall suffer the whole vengeance and wrath threatened in his word, which he liveth forever to inflict; and he will never alter what he hath threatened. O let sinners be now persuaded to make this infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God, their friend through Jesus Christ, and so they shall infallibly escape the wrath that is to come.

Secondly, The next communicable attribute of God is wisdom. The personal wisdom of God is Christ, (1 Corinthians 1:24). But this is his essential wisdom, which is that attribute of God whereby he knows himself, and all possible things, and how to dispose all things to the best ends. Hence he is said to “know all things,” (John 21:17) and to be “God only wise,” (Romans 16:27). Now, God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his wisdom, “His understanding is unsearchable,” (Psalms 147:5). The wisdom of God appears,

1. In the works of creation. The universe is a bright mirror wherein the wisdom of God may be clearly seen. “The Lord by wisdom made the heavens,” (Psalms 136:5). “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,” (Proverbs 3:19). “He hath

established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion," (Jeremiah 10:12). More particularly, the wisdom of God appears, (1.) In the vast variety of creatures which he hath made. Hence the Psalmist cries out, "How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all," (Psalms 104:24). (2.) In the admirable and beautiful order and situation of the creatures. God hath marshaled everything in its proper place and sphere. For instance, the sun, by its position displays the infinite wisdom of its Creator. It is placed in the midst of the planets, to enlighten them with its brightness, and inflame them with its heat, and thereby derive to them such benign qualities as make them beneficial to all mixed bodies. If it were raised as high as the stars, the earth would lose its prolific virtue, and remain a dead carcass for want of its quickening heat; and if it were placed as low as the moon, the air would be inflamed with its excessive heat, the waters would be dried up, and every planet scorched. But at the due distance at which it is placed, it purifies the air, abates the superfluities of the waters, temperately warms the earth, and so serves all the purposes of life and vegetation. It could not be in another position without the disorder and hurt of universal nature. Again, the expansion of the air from the ethereal heavens to the earth is another testimony of divine wisdom: for it is transparent and of a subtle nature, and so a fit medium to convey light and celestial influences to this lower world. Moreover, the situation of the earth doth also trumpet forth the infinite wisdom of its Divine Maker: for it is as it were the pavement of the world, and placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter. (3.) In fitting everything for its proper end and use, so that nothing is unprofitable and useless. After the most diligent and accurate inquiry into the works of God, there is nothing to be found superfluous, and there is nothing defective. (4.) In the subordination of all its parts, to one common end. Though they are of different natures, as lines vastly distant in themselves, yet they all meet in one common centre, namely, the good and preservation of the whole: "I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel," (Hosea 2:21-22).

2. In the government of the world. God sits in his secret place, surrounded with clouds and darkness, holding the rudder of the world in his hand, and steering its course through all the floatings and tossings of casualty and contingency to his own appointed ends. There he grasps and turns the great engine of nature, fastening one pin and loosing another, moving and removing the several wheels of it, and framing the whole according to the eternal idea of his own understanding. By his governing providence he directs all the actions of his creatures; and, by the secret and efficacious penetration of the divine influence, he powerfully sways and determines them which way he pleases.

3. In the work of redemption. This is the very masterpiece of Divine wisdom; and here shines the manifold or diversified wisdom of God, (Ephesians 3:10). It appears, (1.) In the contrivance thereof. When man had ruined himself by sin, all the wisdom of men and angels could never have devised a method for his recovery. Heaven seemed to be divided upon this awful event. Mercy inclined to save man, but justice interposed for satisfaction. Justice pleaded the law and the curse, by which the souls of sinners are forfeited to vengeance. Mercy, on the other hand, urged, Shall the Almighty build a glorious work, and suffer it to lie in eternal ruins? shall the most excellent creature in the inferior world perish through the subtlety of a malicious and rebellious spirit? shall that arch-rebel triumph for ever, and raise his trophies from the final ruin of the works of the Most

High? Shall the reasonable creature lose the fruition of God, and God lose the subjection and service of his creatures and, shall all mankind be made in vain? Mercy further pleaded, That if the rigorous demands of Justice be heard, it must lie an obscure and unregarded attribute in the divine essence forever; that it alone must be excluded, while all the rest of the attributes had their share of honor. Thus the case was infinitely difficult, and not to be unraveled by the united wit of all the celestial spirits. A bench of angels was incapable to contrive a method of reconciling infinite mercy with inflexible justice, of satisfying the demands of the one, and granting the requests of the other. In this hard exigence [urgency] the wisdom of God interposed, and in the vast treasure of its incomprehensible light, found out an admirable expedient to save man without prejudice to the other divine perfections. The pleas of justice, said the wisdom of God, shall be satisfied in punishing, and the requests of mercy shall be granted in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor mercy for want of compassion; I will have an infinite sacrifice to content justice, and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here justice shall have punishment to accept, and mercy shall have pardon to bestow. My Son shall die, and satisfy justice by his death; and by the virtue and merit of that sacrifice sinners shall be received into favor, and herein mercy shall triumph and be glorified. Here was the most glorious display of wisdom. (2.) In the ordination of a Mediator every way fitly qualified to reconcile men unto God. A mediator must be capable of the sentiments and affections of both the parties he is to reconcile, and a just esteemer of the rights and injuries of the one and the other, and have a common interest in both. The Son of God, by his incarnation, perfectly possesses all these qualities. He hath a nature to please God, and a nature to please sinners. He had both the perfections of the Deity, and all the qualities and sinless infirmities of the humanity. The one fitted him for things pertaining to God, and the other furnished him with a sense of the infirmities of man. —This union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ was necessary to fit and qualify him for the discharge of his threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. —As a Prophet, it was requisite he should be God, that so he might acquaint us with his Father’s will, and reveal the secret purposes and hidden counsels of heaven concerning our salvation, which were locked up in the bosom of God from all eternity. And it was needful he should be man, that he might converse with poor sinners in a familiar manner, and convey the mind and counsels of God to them, in such a way as they could receive them. —As a Priest, he behooved to be a man, that so he might be capable to suffer, and to bear the wrath which the sins of the elect had justly deserved. And it behooved him to be God, to render his temporary sufferings satisfactory. The great dignity and excellency of the divine Mediator’s person made his sufferings of infinite value in God’s account. Though he only suffered as a man, yet he satisfied as God. —As a King, he must be God, to conquer Satan, convert an elect world, and effectually subdue the lusts and corruptions of men. And he must be man, that by the excellency of his example, he might lead us in the way of life. (3.) In the manner whereby this redemption is accomplished, namely, by the humiliation of the Son of God. By this he counteracted the sin of angels and men. Pride is the poison of every sin: for in every transgression the creature prefers his pleasure to and sets up his own will above God’s. This was the special sin of Adam. The devil would have leveled heaven by usurpation. He said in his heart, I will be like the Most High; and man infected with his breath (when he said, Ye shall be like gods) became sick of the same disease. Now, the Divine Redeemer, that he might cure our disease in its source and cause by the quality of the remedy, applied to our pride an unspeakable humility. Man was guilty of the highest robbery in affecting to be equal with God; and the Son, who was in the bosom of God,

and equal to him in majesty and authority, emptied himself by assuming the human nature in its servile state, (Php 2:6-8). It is said, “The word was made flesh,” (John 1:4). The meanest part of our nature is specified to signify the greatness of his abasement. There is such an infinite distance between God and flesh, that the condescension is as admirable as the contrivance. So great was the malignity of human pride, that such a profound humility was requisite for the cure of it. And by this Christ destroyed the works of the devil. (4.) In appointing such contemptible, and in appearance opposite means, to bring about such glorious effects. The way is as admirable as the work. Christ ruined the devil’s empire by the very same nature that he had vanquished, and by the very means which he had made use of to establish and confirm it. He took not upon him the nature of angels, which is equal to Satan in strength and power; but he took part of flesh and blood, that he might the more signally triumph over that proud spirit in the human nature, which was inferior to his, and had been vanquished by him in paradise. For this end he did not immediately exercise omnipotent power to destroy him, but managed our weakness to foil the roaring lion. He did not enter the lists with Satan in the glory of his Deity, but disguised under the human nature which was subject to mortality. And thus the devil was overcome in the same nature over which he first got the victory. For as the whole race of mankind was captivated by him in Adam the representative, so believers are made victorious over him by the conquest which their representative obtained in the whole course of his sufferings. As our ruin was effected by the subtlety of Satan, so our recovery is wrought by the wisdom of God, who takes the wise in their own craftiness. Thus eternal life springs from death, glory from ignominy, and blessedness from a curse. We are healed by stripes, quickened by death, purchased by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honor by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty. Thus the wisdom of God shines with a radiant brightness in the work of redemption.

I shall conclude this point with a few inferences.

1. God is omniscient; “he knows all things,” (John 21:17). “All things are naked and open to him,” (Hebrews 4:13). His eye sees us wherever we are. Even future contingencies, as well as the most necessary things are known to him. This is beautifully described by the Psalmist, (Psalms 139:1, Psalms 139:10), which deserves your serious perusal.

2. His knowledge of all things is not conjectural, but infallible: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, who hath been his counsellor?” (Romans 11:33-34). There is nothing to him contingent or uncertain; but everything falls out exactly according to his foreknowledge and predetermination.

3. It is altogether independent on the creature, whose motions and operations were known to him from eternity, and are all regulated by his counsel.

4. Lastly, To this wise God we may safely entrust all our concerns, knowing he will manage them all so as to promote his own glory and our real good.

Thirdly, The next communicable perfection of God is power, whereby he can do whatever he pleases, and whatsoever is not repugnant to his nature: “Ah, Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth, by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard

for thee," (Jeremiah 32:17). He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in power; which the scripture holds forth,1. Positively, "I am the Almighty God," (Genesis 17:1). 2. Negatively, "With God nothing shall be impossible," (Luke 1:37). 3. Comparatively, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible," (Matthew 19:26). The power of God appears,

1. In the creation of the world, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," (Romans 1:20). O how great must that power be, which produced the beautiful fabric of the universe, without the concurrence of any material cause! This proclaims it to be truly infinite: for nothing less could make such distant extremes as nothing and being to meet together. All this was done by a word, one simple act of his will; for "he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast," (Psalms 33:9).

2. In the preservation of the world, and all things therein. He "upholdeth all things by the word of his power," (Hebrews 1:3). He preserves all the creatures in their proper place, for their proper use and end. It is by the Divine Power that the heavenly bodies have constantly rolled about in their spheres for so many ages, without wearing or moving out of their proper course; and that the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order to this very day. He preserves the confederacies of nature, sets bounds to the raging sea, and keeps it within its limits by a girdle of sand. He is the powerful preserver of man and beast. He preserves them in their kind and species, by the constant succession of them one after another; so that, though the individuals perish, yet the species continues. O what a mighty power must that be that sustains so many creatures, sets bounds to the raging sea, holds the wind in his fists, and preserves a comely order and sweet harmony among all the creatures!

3. In the government of the world. He is the supreme Rector of the universe, and manages all things, so that they contribute to the advancement of his own glory, and the advantage of his people. By his governing providence he directs all the actions and motions of his creatures, and powerfully determines them which way soever he pleases. All the creatures are called his host, because he marshals them as an army to serve his important purposes. The whole system of nature is ready to favor and act for men when he commands it, and it is ready to punish them when he gives it a commission. Thus he checked the Red Sea, and it obeyed his voice, (Psalms 106:9). Its rapid motion quickly ceased, and the fluid waters were immediately ranged as defensive walls to secure the march of his people. At the command of God, the sea again recovered its wonted violence, and the watery walls came tumbling down upon the heads of the proud Egyptian oppressor and his host. The sea so exactly obeyed its orders, that not one Israelite was drowned, and not one Egyptian was saved alive. More particularly, the power of God appears in the moral government of the world.

(1.) In governing and ordering the hearts of men, so that they are not masters of their own affections, but often act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved or proposed. Of which we have eminent instances in Esau and Balaam. He hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them what way he pleases. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favor the Israelites, by sending them away with great riches given them by way of loan. He turned Jehoshaphat's enemies from him when they came with a purpose to destroy him, (2 Chronicles 18:31).

(2.) In governing and managing the most stubborn creatures, as devils and wicked men. [1.] In his, governing devils. They have great power, and are full of malice. The devil is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We could have no quiet nor safety in the world, if his power were not restrained, and his malice curbed by one that is mightier than the infernal fiend. He would turn all things upside down, plague the world, burn cities and houses, and plunder us of all the supports of life, if he were not held in a chain by the Omnipotent Governor of the world. But God overmasters his strength, so that he cannot move one hair's breadth beyond his tether. God has all the devils chained, and he governs all their motions. The devil could not touch Job in his person and goods without the divine permission; nor could he enter into the Gadarene swine without a special license. If we consider the great malice of these invisible enemies, and the vast extent of their power, we will easily see that there could be no safety or security for men, if they were not curbed and restrained by a superior power. [2.] In governing wicked men. All the imaginations of their hearts are evil, and only evil continually. They are fully bent upon mischief, and drink iniquity like water. What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, and run with a rapid violence, if the Divine Power did not interpose to bear down the flood gates of it? Human society would be rooted up, the whole world drenched in blood, and all things would run into a sea of confusion, if God did not bridle and restrain the lusts and corruptions of men. The king of Assyria triumphed much in his design against Jerusalem; but how did God govern and manage that wild ass! "I Will put my hook into thy nose, (says Jehovah), and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest," (Isaiah 37:29). And we are told, that "the very wrath of man shall praise him, and that he will restrain the remainder of wrath?" (Psalms 76:10).

(3.) In raising up a church to himself in spite of all his enemies. This is specially seen in founding the New Testament church, and propagating the gospel through the world. The power of God appears admirable in planting the gospel, and converting the world to Christianity. For there were many and great difficulties in the way, as gross and execrable idolatry; and the nations were strongly confirmed and rooted in their idolatry, being trained up and inured [indoctrinated] to it from their infant state. It was as hard to make the Gentiles forsake the religion which they received from their birth, as to make the Africans change their skin, and the leopard his spots. The Pagan religion was derived from their progenitors through a long succession of ages. Hence the heathens accused the Christian religion of novelty, and urged nothing more plausibly than the argument of immemorial prescription for their superstition. They would not consider whether it was just and reasonable, but with a blind deference yielded up themselves to the authority of the ancients. The pomp of the Pagan worship was very pleasing to the flesh; the magnificence of their temples, adorned with the trophies of superstition, their mysterious ceremonies, their music, their processions, their images and altars, their sacrifices and purifications, and the rest of the equipage of a carnal religion, drew their respects and strongly affected their minds through their senses. Whereas the religion of the gospel is spiritual and serious, holy and pure, and hath nothing to move the carnal part. There was then an universal depravation of manners among men; the whole earth was covered with abominations: the most unnatural lusts had lost the fear and shame that naturally attends them. We may see a melancholy picture of their most abandoned conversation, (Romans 1:1-32). The powers of the world were bent against the gospel. The heathen philosopheirs strongly opposed it. When Paul preached at Athens, the Epicureans and Stoics entertained him with scorn and derision; "What will this babbler say?" said they. The heathen

priests conspired to obstruct it. The princes of the world thought themselves obliged to prevent the introduction of a new religion, lest their empire should be in hazard, or the greatness and majesty of it impaired thereby. If we consider the means by which the gospel was propagated, the Divine Power will evidently appear. The persons employed in this great work were a few illiterate fishermen, with a publican and a tent-maker, without authority and power to force men to obedience, and without the charms of eloquence to enforce the belief of the doctrines which they taught. Yet this doctrine prevailed, and the gospel had wonderful success through all the parts of the then known world, and that against all the power and policy of men and devils. Now, how could this possibly be, without a mighty operation of the power of God upon the hearts of men?

(4.) In preserving, defending, and supporting his church under the most terrible tempests of trouble and persecution which were raised against her. This is promised by our blessed Saviour: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” (Matthew 16:18). The most flourishing monarchies have decayed and wasted, and the strongest kingdoms have been broken in pieces; yet the church hath been preserved to this very day, notwithstanding all the subtle and potent enemies which in all ages have been pushing at her. Yea, God has preserved and delivered his church in the greatest extremities, when the danger in all human appearance was unavoidable; as in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in Esther’s days, when a bloody decree was issued to slay all the Jews. Yea, God hath sometimes delivered his church by very weak and contemptible-like instruments, such as Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron, a poor captive in it; and sometimes by very unlikely means, as when he smote Egypt with armies of locusts and lice. In all ages of the world God has gloriously displayed his power in the preservation of his church and people, notwithstanding all the rage, power, and malice of their enemies.

(5.) In the conversion of the elect. Hence the gospel, which is the means and instrument of conversion, is called the power of God, and the rod of his strength ; and the day of the success of the gospel in turning sinners to Christ, is called the day of his power, (Psalms 110:3). O what a mighty power must that be that stills the waves of a tempestuous sea, quells the lusts and stubbornness of the heart, demolishes the strong holds of sin in the soul, routs all the armies of corrupt nature, and makes the obstinate rebellious will strike sail to Christ! The power of God that is exerted here makes a man to think on other objects, and speak in another strain, than he did before. O how admirable is it, that carnal reason should be thus silenced; that legions of devils should be thus driven out; and that men should part with those sins which before they esteemed their chiefest ornaments, and stand at defiance with all the charming allurements and bitter discouragements of the world? The same power that raised Christ from the grave is exerted in the conversion of a sinner, (Ephesians 1:19-20). There is greater power exerted in this case than there was in the creation of the world. For when God made the world, he met with no opposition; he spake the word, and it was done: but when he comes to convert a sinner, he meets with all the opposition which the devil and a corrupt heart can make against him. God wrought but one miracle in the creation: he spake the word and it was done; but there are many miracles wrought in conversion. The blind is made to see, the dead raised, and the deaf hears the voice of the Son of God. O the infinite power of Jehovah! In this work the mighty arm of the Lord in revealed.

(6.) In preserving the souls of believers amidst the many dangers to which they are exposed, and bringing them safely to glory at last. They have many enemies without, a legion of subtle and powerful devils, and a wicked and ensnaring world, with all its allurements and temptations; and

they have many strong lusts and corruptions within; and their graces are but weak, and in their infancy and minority, while they are here: So that it may justly be matter of wonder how they are preserved. But the apostle tells us, that they “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,” (1 Peter 1:5). Indwelling corruption would soon quench grace in their hearts, if it were not kept alive by a divine power. But Christ hath pledged his faithfulness for it, that they shall be kept secure, (John 10:28). It is his power that moderates the violence of temptations, supports his people under them, defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under their feet.

4. Lastly, The power of God appears gloriously in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. Hence in scripture Christ is called the power as well as the wisdom of God. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world. More particularly,

(1.) The power of God shines in Christ’s miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin. The power of the Highest did overshadow her, (Luke 1:35) and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin’s body, and united it to the Divinity. This was foretold many ages before as the effect of the divine power. When Judah was oppressed by two potent kings, and despaired of any escape and deliverance to raise their drooping spirits, the prophet tells them, that he would give them a sign; and a wonderful one it was. Therefore it is said “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,” (Isaiah 7:14). The argument is from the greater to the less: For if God will accomplish that stupendous and unheard of wonder, much more will he rescue his people from the fury of their adversaries.

(2.) In uniting the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, and that without any confusion of the two natures, or changing the one into the other. The two natures of Christ are not mixed together, as liquors that incorporate with one another, when poured into the same vessel. The divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the divine. One nature doth not swallow up another, and make a third distinct from both. But they are distinct, and yet united; conjoined, and yet unmixed: the properties of each nature are preserved entire. O what a wonder of power was here! that two natures, a divine and a human, infinitely distant in themselves, should meet together in a personal conjunction! Here one equal with God is found in the form of a servant; here God and man are united in one; the Creator and the creature are miraculously allied in the same subsistence. Here a God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows. That is an admirable expression, “The Word was made flesh,” (John 1:14). What can be more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God? that a person possessed of all the perfections and excellencies of the Deity should inherit all the infirmities and imperfections of humanity, sin only excepted? Was there not need of infinite power, to bring together terms which were so far sunder? Nothing less than an omnipotent power could effect and bring about what an infinite and incomprehensible wisdom did project in this matter.

(3.) In supporting the human nature of Christ, and keeping it from sinking under the terrible weight of divine wrath that came upon him for our sins, and making him victorious over the devil and all the powers of darkness. His human nature could not possibly have borne up under the wrath of God and the curse of the law, nor held out under such fearful contests with the powers of hell and the world, if it had not been upheld by infinite power. Hence his Father says concerning him, “Behold my servant whom I uphold,” (Isaiah 42:1).

(4.) The divine power did evidently appear in raising Christ from the dead. The apostle tells us, that God exerted his mighty power in Christ when he raised him from the dead, (Ephesians 1:19). The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonah, the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions, and restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of the divine power, and types of the resurrection of our Redeemer. But all these are nothing to what is represented by them: for that was a power over natural causes, and curbing of beasts and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, that was hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces: he unlocked the prison doors wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the belly and ribs of a leviathan. How admirable was it, that he should be raised from under the curse of the law, and the infinite weight of our sins, and brought forth with success and glory after his sharp encounter with the powers of hell! In this the power of God was gloriously manifested. Hence he is said to be raised from the dead "by the glory of the Father," i.e. by his glorious power; and "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," (Romans 1:4). All the miraculous proofs by which God acknowledged him for his Son during his life, had been ineffectual without this. If he had remained in the grave, it had been reasonable to believe him only an ordinary person, and that his death had been the just punishment of his presumption in calling himself the Son of God. But his resurrection from the dead was the most illustrious and convincing evidence, that really he was what he declared himself to be.

I shall conclude, on this point, with a few inferences.

1. God is omnipotent; that is, can do all things. It is true he cannot lie nor deny himself, for these are repugnant to his nature, and argue not power, but weakness and imperfection.

2. God's power never acts to its utmost extent. He can do more always than he either doth or will do, (Matthew 3:9). He can do all things possible; but he only doth what he hath decreed to be done, ((Matthew 26:53-54).

3. Hence we may be confirmed in our belief of the resurrection. Some are ready to reckon it a thing impossible, that there can be a, recollection of the dispersed particles of men's bodies when they are dissolved into dust, and scattered into the four winds. But if we consider the power of God, this will abundantly answer all that can be objected against this truth. Hence saith the apostle, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8). And saith our Saviour to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Almighty power can meet with no let or bar. Unless the particles of men's bodies could be scattered beyond the reach of almighty power, and grinded so small as to escape the knowledge and care of God, this dispersion can make nothing against the faith and possibility of the resurrection.

4. Is God of infinite power? then all his promises shall be most certainly accomplished, whatever difficulties may be in the way thereof. For God is able to bring to pass whatever he has promised to his people. Therefore difficulty or improbability should never discourage or weaken our faith, because the power of God is infinite.

5. They are absolutely sure of salvation who are kept by the power of God; for God is able to keep them from falling, and his power is engaged for their preservation. They are surrounded with and

infolded in the arms of Omnipotence; their souls are in safe custody, being committed unto Christ, from whose hands none can pluck them.

6. Woe to those against whom the power of God is set; for “they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Consider this, O ye sinners, and flee from the wrath that is to come.

7. Abuse not the power of God, by limiting it, as Israel did in the wilderness, (Psalms 78:19) by trusting to an arm of flesh, as too many are apt to do, more than to the God of power, (Jeremiah 17:5) or by fearing the wrath of man, who can only kill the body, and not dreading the displeasure of Almighty God, (Isaiah 2:12-13).

8. Lastly, Improve the power of God by faith, depending upon it for the performance of all his gracious promises towards you and the church; for “he can work, and who shall let it?” For strength to resist and vanquish, sin, Satan, and the world, saying, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” And for grace to enable you to the performance of every commanded duty, saying with the apostle, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Fourthly, The next communicable attribute of God that falls to be considered is holiness, which is the absolute purity of his nature, whereby he delights in whatever is agreeable to his holy will, and in the resemblance of it that is in the creatures. Or, it is the perfect rectitude and integrity of the divine essence, whereby in all that he doth he acts like himself and for himself, delighting in whatever is agreeable to his will and nature, and abhorring whatever is contrary thereto. Hence he is said to be “glorious in holiness,” (Exodus 15:11). And “he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity,” (Habakkuk 1:13). And he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in holiness. Hence the heavenly host proclaim, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,” (Isaiah 6:3). Now, God is, (1.) Necessarily holy. Not only he will not, but he cannot look on iniquity. His holiness is not only an act of his will, but belongs to his essence. (2.) He is essentially holy. Holiness is the essential glory of the divine nature; yea, it is his very essence. Holiness in men is an accessory quality and superadded gift, and is separable from the creature. But in God his essence and his holiness are the same. He could as soon cease to be God, as cease to be holy. (3.) He is perfectly holy. The best saints on earth are but holy in part; there is still a mixture of sin in them while here. But, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,” (1 John 1:5). (4.) He is universally holy; holy in all that he is, in all that he hath, and in all that he doth. He is holy in his name, in his nature, in his word, and in his works.(5.) He is originally holy. Angels and men are made holy; but God is holy of himself, and he is the original spring of all the holiness that is in the creatures.(6.) He is exemplarily holy. The holiness of God is the example and pattern of all the holiness that is in the creatures. Hence we are required to “be holy as God is holy,” (1 Peter 1:16). (7.) He is perpetually and unchangeably holy. The best men on earth may change to the worse; they may grow less holy than they are; but God is immutable in his holiness. He cannot grow more holy than he is, because he is infinitely holy, and his holiness is incapable of any addition. Nor can he grow less holy than he is, because then he would cease to be God. The holiness of God is manifested and discovered,

1. In his word; and that both in the precepts and promises thereof, God manifested his hatred and detestation of sin even in a variety of sacrifices under the ceremonial law; and the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, were a clear

proof, that everything that had a resemblance to evil was loathsome to God. All the legal sacrifices, washings, and purifications, were designed to express what an evil sin is, and how hateful and abominable it is to him. But the holiness of God is most remarkably expressed in the moral law. Hence the law is said to be holy, (Romans 7:12). It is a true transcript of the holiness of God. And it is holy in its precepts. It requires an exact, perfect, and complete holiness in the whole man, in every faculty of the soul, and in every member of the body. It is holy in its prohibitions. It forbids and condemns all impurity and filthiness whatsoever. It discharges not only sinful words and actions, gross and atrocious crimes, and profane, blasphemous, and unprofitable speeches, but all sinful thoughts and irregular motions of the heart. Hence is that exhortation, “0 Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” (Jeremiah 4:14). It is holy in its threatenings. All these have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are a branch of this essential perfection. All the terrible threatenings annexed to the law are declarations of the holiness and purity of God, and of his infinite hatred and detestation of sin. Again, the holiness of God appears in the promises of the word. They are called holy promises, (Psalms 105:42) and they are designed to promote and encourage true holiness. Hence says the apostle, “Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord,” 2 Corinthians 7:1). By them we are “made partakers of a divine nature,” (2 Peter 1:4).

2. The holiness of God is manifested in his works. Hence the Psalmist saith, “The Lord is holy in all his works,” (Psalms 145:17). More particularly,

(1.) The divine holiness appears in the creation of man. Solomon tells us that, “God made man upright;” (Ecclesiastes 7:29) and Moses says, that he was “made after the image of God,” (Genesis 1:27). Now, the image of God in man consists chiefly in holiness. Therefore the new man is said to be “created after God in righteousness and true holiness,” (Ephesians 4:24). Adam was made with a perfection of grace. There was an entire and universal rectitude in all its faculties, disposing them to their proper operations. There was no disorder among his affections, but a perfect agreement between the flesh and the spirit; and they both joined in the service of God. He fully obeyed the first and great command, of loving the Lord with all his soul and strength, and his love to other things was regulated by his love to God. When Adam dropped from the creating finger of God, he had knowledge in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections. There was such a harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Here then was a display of the divine purity.

(2.) In the works of Providence; particularly in his judicial proceedings against sinners for the violation of his holy and righteous laws. All the fearful judgments which have been poured down upon sinners, spring from God’s holiness and hatred of sin. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. All diseases and sicknesses, wars, pestilence, plagues, and famines, are designed to vindicate God’s holiness and hatred of sin. And therefore, when God had smitten the two sons of Aaron for offering strange fire, he says, “I Will be sanctified in them that draw nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified,” (Leviticus 10:3). He glorified himself in declaring by that act, before all the people, that he is a holy God, that cannot endure sin and disobedience. More particularly,

[1.] God's holiness and hatred of sin is clearly manifested in his punishing the angels that sinned. It is said, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," (2 Peter 2:4). Neither their mighty numbers, nor the nobility of their natures, could incline their offended Sovereign to spare them; they were immediately turned out of heaven, and expelled from the divine presence. Their case is hopeless and helpless; no mercy will ever be shown to one of them, being under the blackness of darkness forever.

[2.] In the punishment threatened and inflicted on man for his first apostasy from God. Man in his first state was the friend and favorite of heaven; by his extraction and descent he was the Son of God, a little lower than the angels; consecrated and crowned for the service of his Maker, and appointed as king over the inferior world; he was placed in paradise, the garden of God, and admitted to fellowship and communion with him. But sin hath divested him of all his dignity and glory. By his rebellion against his Creator, he made a forfeiture of his dominion, and so lost the obedience of the sensible creatures, and the service of the insensible. He was thrust out of paradise, banished from the presence of God, and debarred from fellowship and communion with him. God immediately sentenced him and all his posterity to misery, death, and ruin. This is a clear demonstration of the infinite purity and holiness of God. But blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away.

[3.] In executing terrible and strange judgments upon sinners. It was for sin that God drowned the old world with a deluge of water, rained hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and made the earth open her mouth, and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It was for sin that God brought terrible destroying judgments upon Jerusalem. All calamities and judgments spring from this bitter root, as sword, pestilence, distempers of body, perplexities of mind, poverty, reproach, and disgrace, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men. All this shows how hateful sin is to God.

[4.] In punishing sins seemingly small with great and heavy judgments. A multitude of angels were sent down to hell for an aspiring thought, as some think. Uzzah, a good man, was struck dead in a moment for touching the ark; yea, fifty thousand Bethshemites were smitten dead for looking into it. We are apt to entertain slight thoughts of many sins: but God hath set forth some as examples of his hatred and abhorrence of sins seemingly small, for a warning to others, and a testimony and demonstration of his exact holiness.

[5.] In bringing heavy afflictions on his own people for sin. Even the sins of believers in Christ do sometimes cost them very dear. He will not suffer them to pass without correction for their transgressions. Though they are exempted from everlasting torments in hell, yet they are not spared from the furnace of affliction here on earth. We have instances of this in David, Solomon, Jonah, and other saints. Yea, sometimes God in this life, punishes sin more severely in his own people than in other men. Moses was excluded from the land of Canaan but for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, though many greater sinners were suffered to enter in. Such severity towards his own people is a plain demonstration, that God hates sin as sin, and not because the worst men commit it.

[6.] In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting torments for sin. That an infinitely good God, who is goodness itself, and delights in mercy, should adjudge so many of his own

creatures to the everlasting pains and torments of hell, must proceed from his infinite holiness, on account of something infinitely detested and abhorred by him.

3. The holiness of God appears in our redemption by Jesus Christ. Here his love to holiness and his hatred of sin is most conspicuous. All the demonstrations that ever God gave of his hatred of sin were nothing in comparison of this. Neither all the vials of wrath and judgment which God hath poured out since the world began, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the groans and roarings of the damned in hell, nor that irreversible sentence pronounced against the fallen angels, do afford such a demonstration of the divine holiness, and hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of the blessed Redeemer. This will appear, if ye consider,

(1.) The great dignity and excellency of his person. He was the eternal and only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Yet he must descend from the throne of his majesty, divest himself of his robes of insupportable light, take upon him the form of a servant, become a curse, and bleed to death for sin. Did ever sin appear so hateful to God as here? To demonstrate God's infinite holiness, and hatred of sin, he would have the most glorious and most excellent person in heaven and earth to suffer for it. He would have his own Son to die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the terrible flames of divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain for ever disparaged by the violations of his law.

(2.) How dear he was to his Father. He was his only begotten Son, he had not another; the only darling and the chief delight of his soul, who had lain in his bosom from all eternity. Yet as dear as he was to God, he would not and could not spare him, when he stood charged with his people's sins. For saith the apostle, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," (Romans 8:32). As he spared him not in a way of free bounty, giving him freely as a ransom for their souls! so he spared him not in a way of vindictive justice, but exacted the utmost mite of satisfaction from him for their sins.

(3.) The greatness of his sufferings. Indeed the extremity of his sufferings cannot be expressed. Insensible nature, as if it had been capable of understanding and affection, was disordered in its whole frame at his death. The sun forsook his shining, and clothed the whole heavens in black; so that the air was dark at noon-day, as if it had been midnight. The earth shook and trembled, the rocks were rent asunder, and universal nature shrank. Christ suffered all that wrath which was due to the elect for their sins. His sufferings were equivalent to those of the damned. He suffered a punishment of loss: for all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended for a time. The divine nature kept back all its joys from the human nature of Christ, in the time of his greatest sufferings. We deserved to have been separated from God forever; and therefore our Redeemer was deserted for a time. There was a suspension of all joy and comfort from his soul, when he needed it most. This was most afflicting and cutting to him, who had never seen a frown in his Father's face before. It made him cry out with a lamentable accent, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Again, he suffered a punishment of sense, and that with respect to both his body and soul. The elect had forfeited both soul and body to divine vengeance; and therefore Christ suffered in both. The sufferings of his body were indeed terrible. It was filled with exquisite torture and pain. His hands and his feet, the most sensible parts were pierced with nails. His body was distended with such pains and torments as when all the parts are out of joint. Hence it is said of him, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is

melted in the midst of my bowels, my strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death," (Psalms 22:14-15). Now, thus did the Son of God suffer. His pure and blessed hands, which were never stretched out but to do good, were pierced and rent asunder: and those feet which bore the Redeemer of the world, and for which the very waters had a reverence, were nailed to a tree. His body which was the precious workmanship of the Holy Ghost, and the temple of the Deity was destroyed. But his bodily sufferings were but the body of his sufferings. It was the sufferings of his soul that was the soul of his sufferings. No tongue can tell you what he endured here. When all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended, then an impetuous torrent of unmixed sorrows broke into his soul. O what agonies and conflicts, what sharp encounters, and distresses did he meet with from the wrath of God that was poured out upon him! He bore the wrath of an angry God, pure wrath without any alloy or mixture, and all that wrath which was due to the elect through all eternity for their innumerable sins. Sin was so hateful to God, that nothing could expiate it, or satisfy for it, but the death and bitter agonies of his dear Son.

(4.) Consider the cause of his sufferings. It was not for any sin of his own, for he had none, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. They were made his only by a voluntary susception, by taking his people's sins upon him. And though they were only imputed to him, yet God would not spare him. So that there is nothing wherein the divine holiness and hatred of sin is so manifest as in the sufferings of his own dear Son. This was a greater demonstration thereof than if all men and angels had suffered for it eternally in hell-fire.

It remains now to shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. Hence see the great evil of sin. It strikes against the divine holiness, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity so that it is not only contrary to our own interest, but to the very nature of God. All sin aims in general at the being of God, but especially at the holiness of his being. There are some sins that strike more directly against one divine perfection, and some against another; but all sins agree together in their enmity against the holiness of God. Hence, when Sennacherib's sin is aggravated, the Holy Spirit takes the rise from this perfection: "Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel," (2 Kings 19:22). God cannot but hate that which is directly opposite to the glory of his nature, and the lustre and varnish of all his other perfections. Now, what an horrid evil must that be which is so contrary to the holy nature of God, and which is infinitely detested and abhorred by him?

2. Hence see the excellency of true gospel-holiness, Holiness is the glory and beauty of God, and the glory of the heavenly angels; and therefore it must be the glory of men and women, that which makes them truly glorious. In this respect the king's daughter is said to be all glorious within. The church is glorious, because she is holy. Hence Christ sanctifies and cleanses it, that he may present it to himself a glorious church, (Ephesians 5:25-26). Holiness is the image of God in the rational creature. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God. This is our chief excellency. Man's original glory and happiness consisted in this; and the excellency of angels above devils lies in this. Holiness hath a self-evidencing excellency in it. There is such a beauty and majesty in it, as commands an acknowledgment of it from the consciences of all sorts of knowing men.

3. God can have no gracious communion with unholy sinners: “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). It is simply impossible that an infinitely holy God should embrace vile polluted sinners that are not washed from their filthiness. They can have no fellowship with him here or hereafter. God will not give impure sinners one good look; for “he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity,” (Habakkuk 1:13). All communion is founded on union, and union upon likeness. But what likeness is there between a holy God and vile polluted creatures? Therefore they can never expect to have any communion with him, unless they be made clean. Hence they are directed to this, in order to their communion with God: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded,” (James 4:8). “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

4. The best of saints, who have attained the highest degrees, and made the greatest improvements in holiness and purity, may be ashamed in the presence of an infinitely holy God; for they are far short of that holiness which God requires, and all the purity they have attained is sadly tinctured with impurity. It had this effect upon the evangelical prophet, when he had a vision of the holy God. “Woe is me,” says he, “for I am undone, because I am 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).

5. Despisers of holiness are despisers of God. For holiness is the glory of God, and that in which he delights above all things. For men, therefore, to despise holiness in the saints, and to make a mock of their holy lives and practices, is a high contempt of the holy God, who will highly resent such a great indignity done him.

6. There is no access to God without a Mediator. “For our God is a consuming fire,” (Hebrews 12:29), and our sin hath made us as stubble fully dry. He is infinitely pure and holy, and we are vile filthy creatures; so that it is quite impossible for us to have any access to him, or communion with him, on our own account. We have all reason to cry out, as “Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?” (1 Samuel 6:20). There is no standing before him without a Mediator. The spots and blemishes of our best duties cannot be hid from the eyes of his holiness. He cannot accept of a righteousness lower than that which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his nature: but even our highest obedience and best righteousness does not in any degree suit the divine holiness: and therefore it cannot challenge any acceptance with God. The righteousness of Christ, being the righteousness of God, a perfect and unspotted righteousness, is that wherein alone the holiness of God can acquiesce, and is the foundation of all access to God, and communion with him.

7. Is God infinitely and necessarily holy, so that he cannot but hate sin? then how admirable is the patience of God towards this land, and the generation wherein we live? How much sin and wickedness abounds amongst us? Alas! all kinds of sin woefully prevail at this day among all ranks and degrees of persons, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble; all have corrupted their way. Sins of a heinous nature are to be found among us, such as bid God defiance; horrid blasphemies, hideous oaths, vile adulteries, cruel oppressions, contempt of religion, and gross

profanation of the Lord's day. Add to all these, ingratitude, worldliness, pride, and self-conceit among such as are more eminent for a profession of religion. All these are committed under a clear gospel-light, after signal mercies and deliverances, against the most solemn covenant engagements, personal and national, and against manifold rebukes and warnings from the word and providence of God. And alas! how are these sins increased and multiplied? Who can compute the number of the sins which one profane wretch is guilty of? But what are these to the sins of a whole city? and what are the sins of a whole city to the sins of the whole nation? Who can compute the number of the sins which Scotland is guilty of in one day? But what are these to the sins which have been committed for a great many years past? Ah! we are a people deeply laden with iniquity. O what matter of admiration is here, that God bears so long with us! His holiness and purity renders his patience the more astonishing. O the riches of his forbearance towards us! Admire it and adore it, and praise and bless him for it; and beware of abusing it, by taking liberty to go on in sin, because of it. Such an amazing patience, if abused, will render our judgment the more severe.

8. Lastly, Be exhorted to make a suitable improvement of the holiness of God, by fleeing to Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness alone can make you acceptable to God, and whose Spirit can sanctify and cleanse you; by giving thanks at the remembrance of the divine holiness, by proclaiming the glory thereof; and by studying holiness in all manner of life and conversation.

Fifthly, The next communicable attribute of God that falls under our consideration is his justice, which is the perfect rectitude of his nature, whereby he is infinitely righteous and equal, both in himself, and in all his dealings with his creatures: "Just and right is he," (Deuteronomy 32:4). God is just to himself in acting in all things agreeable to his nature and perfections. All his actions are such as become such a pure and holy being as he is. He cannot do anything that is contrary to the perfection of his nature: he cannot lie nor deny himself. He is just to himself in maintaining his own glory, and his divine rights and prerogatives; for he will not give his glory to another. And he is just towards his creatures in all his dealings with them, particularly with man. Here God may be considered, 1. As a sovereign Lord; and, 2. As supreme governor and Judge of the world.

1. As sovereign Lord. And so he hath a right to do with his own what he will. He may order and dispose of all the creatures according to his pleasure, (Daniel 4:35). We are all in his hand as clay in the hand of the potter. He hath a sovereign and absolute right to use and dispose of us according to his own pleasure, to set bounds to our habitation, carve out our lot in the world, and set us high or low, in prosperity or adversity, as he pleaseth. It is so also, as to his dispensations of grace. He may give grace to whom he will, and withhold it from whom he will; and what he wills in that matter is just and right, because he wills it.

2. As supreme Governor and Judge of the world. And so he is just in governing his rational creatures in a way agreeable to their nature, according to a law which he has given them. His justice in this character is either legislative or executive.

(1.) There is a legislative justice, which is that whereby he gives most just and righteous laws to his creatures, commanding and forbidding what is fit for them in right reason to do and forbear. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our king, the Lord is our lawgiver," (Isaiah 33:22). Man being a reasonable creature, capable of moral government, therefore, that God might rule him according to his nature, he hath given him a law, confirmed by promises of reward, to draw him by hope, and

by threatenings of punishment to deter him by fear. Hence Moses tells the Israelites, that he had “set before them life and good, and death and evil,” (Deuteronomy 30:15) and that he had “set before them life and death, blessing and cursing,” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

(2.) There is God’s executive justice, called also by some his judicial justice, by others his distributive justice. In this respect he is just in giving every one his due, and in rendering unto all men according to their works, without respect of persons. This executive justice of God is either remunerative or afflictive.

[1.] There is a remunerative or rewarding justice. God is just in rewarding the righteous. “Verily there is a reward for the righteous,” (Psalms 58:11). The saints shall not serve him for nought. Though they may be losers for him, yet they shall not be losers by him: “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love,” (Hebrews 6:10). He bountifully rewards his people’s obedience, and their diligence and faithfulness in his service. Hence David says, “The Lord rewardeth me according to my righteousness,” (Psalms 18:20). Sometimes he rewards them with temporal blessings: for godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come. Sometimes providence doth notably interpose, and load obedience with blessings here in the world, to the conviction of all beholders, so that men are constrained to say, “Verily there is a reward for the righteous.” But however he do as to outward things, yet he rewards his people with inward blessings. There are fresh supplies and influences of grace, near and intimate communion with him, sweet manifestations of his favor and love, intimations of peace and pardon, and joy and peace in believing, &c. Even “in keeping his commandments there is great reward,” (Psalms 19:11). And he rewards them with eternal blessings, (2 Thessalonians 1:7). Now, this reward is not of debt but of grace. It doth not imply any merit, but is free and gratuitous. It is not because they deserve it, but because Christ has merited it, and God has graciously promised it.

[2.] There is an afflictive justice. God is just in all the afflictions and troubles which he brings upon his creatures; because he always punishes sinners by a law. The violations of his holy and righteous laws make them obnoxious to his judgments. Sometimes God sends afflictions upon people to chastise and correct them for their sins. Now, all the troubles of believers are of this kind: for as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens. Some of their afflictions are intended to reduce them from their strayings. Hence says David, “Before I was afflicted I went astray,” and, “It was good for me that I was afflicted.” Indeed God choseth some in the furnace of affliction. The hot furnace is God’s work-house wherein he sometimes forms vessels of honor. Manasseh is an eminent instance of this. Many that were never serious before, are brought to consider their ways in their affliction. Sometimes God takes vengeance on wicked men for their sins and disobedience to his laws: and this is called vindictive justice, (Romans 3:5-6) which is essential to the nature of God, and is not merely an effect of his will. He cannot let sin go unpunished. He not only will not, but he cannot acquit the wicked. But more of this afterwards. The justice of God is manifested and discovered,

1. In the temporal judgments which he brings upon sinners even in this life. The saints own this: “Thou art just in all that is brought upon us,” (Nehemiah 9:33). The end and design of all God’s judgments is to witness to the world, that he is a just and righteous God. All the fearful plagues and terrible judgments which God has brought upon the world, proclaim and manifest his justice.

2. In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting pains and torments for sin, according to that dreadful sentence which shall be pronounced at the last day: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," (Matthew 25:41). If you could descend into the bottomless pit, and view the pains and torments of hell, and hear the terrible shrieks and roarings of the damned wallowing in these sulphureous flames, you could not shun to cry out, O the severity of divine justice! Though they are the works of God's own hands, and roar and cry under their torments, yet they cannot obtain any mitigation of their pains, nay, not so much as one drop of water to cool their tongues. That an infinitely good and gracious God, that delights in mercy, should thus torment so many of his own creatures, O how incorruptible must his justice be!

3. In the death and sufferings of Christ. God gave his beloved Son to the death for this end, that it might be known what a just and righteous God he is. So the apostle shows us, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness," (Romans 3:25) &c. He set him forth in garments rolled in blood, to declare his justice and righteousness to the world. After man turned rebel, and apostatized from God, there was no way to keep up the credit and honor of divine justice, but either a strict execution of the law's sentence, or a full satisfaction. The execution would have destroyed the whole race of Adam. Therefore Christ stepped in, and made a sufficient satisfaction by his death and sufferings, that so God might exercise his mercy without prejudice to his justice. Thus the blood of the Son of God must be shed for sin, to let the world see that he is a just and righteous God. The justice of God could and would be satisfied with no less. Hence it is said, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all," (Romans 8:32). If forbearance might have been expected from any, surely it might from God, who is full of pity and tender mercy: yet God in this case spared him 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 God spared not his own Son. Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy; yet it was denied to Christ, when he stood in the room of the elect. God abated him not a minute of the time appointed for his sufferings, nor one degree of the wrath which he was to bear. Nay, though in the garden, when Christ fell on the ground, and put up that lamentable and pitiful cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" yet no abatement was granted to him. The Father of mercies saw his dear Son humbled in his presence, and yet dealt with him in extreme severity. The sword of justice was in a manner asleep before, in all the terrible judgments which had been executed on the world, but now it must be awakened and roused up to pierce the heart of the blessed Redeemer. Hence it is said, "awake O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd," (Zechariah 13:7). If divine justice had descended from heaven in a visible form, and hanged up millions of sinners in chains of wrath, it had not been such a demonstration of the wrath of God, and his hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of his own Son. When we hear that God exposed his own Son to the utmost severity of wrath and vengeance, may we not justly cry out O the infinite evil of sin! O the inflexible severity of divine justice! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. The justice of God will be clearly manifested at the great day. God hath reared up many trophies already to the honor of his power and justice out of the ruins of his most insolent enemies: but then will be the most solemn triumph of divine justice. The apostle tells us that "he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," (Acts 17:31). On

that awful day the justice and righteousness of God shall be clearly revealed, therefore it is called “the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” (Romans 2:5). The equity of God’s dealings and dispensations is not now so fully seen: but all will be open and manifest on that day. Then he will liberally reward the righteous, and severely punish the wicked.

5. God’s justice will shine forever in the torments of the damned in hell. The smoke of their furnace, their yellings and roarings, will proclaim through eternity the inerrorable justice and severity of God. It is not enough for the satisfaction of his justice to deprive them of heaven and happiness; but he will inflict the most tormenting punishment upon sense and conscience in hell. For as both soul and body were guilty in this life, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin, so it is but just and equal that they should both feel the penal effects of it hereafter. Sinners shall then be tormented in that wherein they most delighted: they shall then be invested with those objects which will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. The lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness, forever, are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery. Their punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God’s majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessary in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and concentrated upon damned spirits. The fire without will not be so tormenting as the fire within them. Then all the tormenting passions will be inflamed. What rancor, reluctance, and rage, will there be against the just power that sentenced them to hell! what impatience and indignation against themselves for their willful and inexcusable sins, the just cause of it! how will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction as the final remedy of their misery! But all their ardent wishes will be in vain. For the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell, as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear one hour. The justice of God will blaze forth forever in the agonies and torments of the damned.

It may not be improper here to take notice of, and answer some objections that are made against the divine justice.

Object.1. If God be infinitely just and righteous, how stands it with his justice that insolent contemners of his majesty and laws should prosper in the world? This was observed by the saints long ago; (see Psalms 73:5, Psalms 73:7-8, Psalms 73:12); and has proved a stumbling-block to some of God’s own children, and has been apt to make them question his justice; (see Job 21:7-14; Jeremiah 12:1-2). But in answer, consider,

1. That the wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God’s work. Though they do not design and intend his glory, yet they may be instrumental in promoting it. Thus Cyrus was instrumental for the building of God’s temple at Jerusalem. Now there is some kind of justice in it that such persons should have a temporal reward. God is pleased to suffer those to prosper under whose wings his own people are sheltered. He will not be in any man’s debt. Nebuchadnezzar did some service for God, and the Lord rewarded him for it by granting him an enlargement of greatness, (Ezekiel 29:18-20).

2. God doth not always let the wicked prosper in their sin. There are some whom he punishes openly, that his justice may be observed by all. Hence the Psalmist saith, “The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands,” (Psalms 9:18). Sometimes their prosperity is but short lived, and they are suddenly cast down, as the Psalmist remarks, (Psalms 73:18-20). His justice is seen striking men dead sometimes in the very act of sin; as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, &c.

3. God suffers men to go on in sin and prosper, that he may render them the more inexcusable. This goodness and forbearance should lead them to repentance; and when it does not, it aggravates their sin, and makes them the more inexcusable, when he comes to reckon with them. Hence it is said of Jezebel, “I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not,” (Revelation 2:21). God spins out his mercies toward sinners; and if they do not repent and amend, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation.

4. If God let the wicked prosper for a while, the vial of his wrath is all that while filling up, his sword is whetting and though he forbear them for a time, yet longsuffering is not forgiveness. The longer it be era he give the blow, it will be the heavier when it comes. The last scene of justice is coming, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. There is a day of wrath approaching, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then he will glorify his justice in taking vengeance on them for all their sins. God hath an eternity in which He will punish the wicked. Divine justice may be as a lion asleep for a time: but at last this lion will awake, and roar upon the sinner. Their long continued prosperity will heighten their eternal condemnation. There are many sinners in hell who lived in great pomp and prosperity in the world, and are now roaring under the terrible lashes of inexorable justice. Thus ye may see that the prosperity of the wicked is consistent enough with the justice of God.

Object. 2. God’s own people oft-times suffer great afflictions in the world; they are persecuted and oppressed, and meet with a variety of troubles, (Psalms 73:14). How stands this with the justice of God?

Ans. 1. The ways of God’s judgments, though they are sometimes secret, yet they are never unjust. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. There are culpable causes in them from which their afflictions spring. They have their spots and blemishes as well as others. Though they may be free from gross and atrocious crimes, yet they are guilty of much pride and passion, censoriousness, worldliness, &c. And the sins of God’s people are more provoking in his sight than the sins of other men. And God will not suffer them to pass without correction: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities,” (Amos 3:2). This justifies God in all the evils that befall them.

2. All the trials and sufferings of the godly are designed to refine and purify them, to promote their spiritual and eternal good, (Hebrews 12:10). Nothing proclaims God’s faithfulness more than his taking such a course with them as may make them better. Hence says David, “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me,” (Psalms 119:75). Though they are sometimes pinched with wants, and meet with various outward troubles, yet even these are the accomplishments of a gracious promise, and are ordered for their good. It is to chastise them for their sin, and quicken them to repentance and mortification, to try and exercise their faith

and patience, their sincerity and love to God, to wean their hearts from the world, and to promote their growth in grace.

3. It is no injustice in God to inflict a lesser punishment to prevent a greater. The best of God's children have that in them which is meritorious of hell; and doth God any wrong to them when he useth only the rod, when they deserved the scorpion? An earthly parent will not be reckoned cruel or unjust, if he only correct his children who deserved to be disinherited. When God corrects his children, he only puts wormwood into their cup, whereas he might fill it up with fire and brimstone. Under the greatest pressure, they have just cause rather to admire his mercy, than to complain of His justice. So did the afflicted church, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

Object. 3 If God be infinitely just, how could he transfer the punishment from the guilty? This is the objection of the Socinians against Christ's suffering for the sins of the elect. It is a violation of justice, say they, to transfer the punishment from one to another. How then could the righteous God punish his innocent Son for our sins?

I answer to this in general, That in some cases it is not unjust to punish the innocent for the guilty. For though an innocent person cannot suffer as innocent without injustice, yet he may voluntarily contract an obligation which will expose him to deserved sufferings. The innocent may suffer for the guilty, when he has power to dispose of his own life, and puts himself freely and voluntarily under an obligation to suffer, and is admitted to suffer by him who has power to punish, and when no detriment, but rather an advantage, accrues to the public thereby. In these circumstances, justice hath nothing to say against the punishing of an innocent person in the room of the guilty. Now, there is a concurrence of all these in the case in hand.

For, 1. Christ had absolute power to dispose of himself. One reason why a man is not allowed to lay down his life for another is, because his life is not at his own disposal. But Christ was absolute lord of his own life, and had power to keep it or lay it down as he pleased. So he declares, "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. This commandment have I received of my Father," (John 10:18).

2. He freely consented to suffer for his people, and to undergo the punishment that they deserved. To compel an innocent person to suffer for the offences of another, may be an injury. But in this case there was no constraint: for Christ most willingly offered Himself: yea, he was not only willing, but most earnest and desirous to suffer and die in our room, (Luke 12:50). "I have a, baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

3. The Father admitted him as our Surety, and was well content that His sufferings should stand for ours, and that we thereupon should be absolved and discharged. It was the Father's will that Christ should undertake this work. Hence it is said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," (Psalms 40:2). And the Father loved Christ, because he so cheerfully consented to it: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again," (John 10:17).

4. There was no detriment to the public by Christ's death; but, on the contrary, many advantages rebounded to it thereby. One reason why an innocent man cannot suffer for a malefactor is, because the community would lose a good man, and might suffer by the sparing of an ill member, and the innocent sufferer cannot have his life restored again being once lost. But in this case all things are quite otherwise: for Christ laid down his life, but so as to take it up again. He rose again

on the third day, and death was swallowed up in victory. And those for whom he suffered were reclaimed, effectually changed, and made serviceable to God and man. So that here there was no injury done to any party by Christ's sufferings, though an innocent person. Not to them for whom he died; for they have inexpressible benefit thereby: he is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Not to the person suffering: for he was perfectly willing, and suffered nothing without his own consent. Not to God: for he himself found out the ransom, and admitted Christ as our Surety. Not to anything concerned in the government of God: for by the death of Christ all the ends of God's government were secured. His honor was hereby vindicated, the authority of his law preserved, and his subjects, by such an instance of severity on his own Son, were deterred from violating it. So that there is no injustice to any in God's punishing Christ in his people's stead.

Object. 4. How is it consistent with the justice of God to punish temporary sins with eternal torments in hell? Some think it hard, and scarcely consistent with infinite justice, to inflict eternal punishment for sins committed in a little time. But to clear the justice of God in this, consider,

1. That eternal punishment is agreeable to the sanction of the law. The wisdom of God required, that the penalty threatened upon the transgressor should be in its own nature so dreadful and terrible, that the fear of it might conquer and overrule all the allurements and temptations to sin. If it had not been so, it would have reflected upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver, as if he had been defective, in not binding his subjects firmly enough to their duty, and the ends of government would not have been obtained. And therefore the first and second death was threatened to Adam in case of disobedience. And fear, as a watchful sentinel, was placed in his breast, that no guilty thought or irregular desire should enter in to break the tables of the law deposited there. So that eternal death is due to sinners by the sanction of the law.

2. The righteousness of God in punishing the wicked for ever in hell will appear, if ye consider that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely serve and obey him shall be rewarded with everlasting happiness. They shall receive a blessedness most worthy of God to bestow, a blessedness that far surmounts our most comprehensive thoughts and imaginations. For eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him. Now, if everlasting felicity be despised and rejected, nothing remains but endless misery to be the sinner's portion. The consequence is infallible: For if sin, with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, it is most just and equal that the rational creature should inherit the fruit of its own choice. What can be more just and reasonable, than that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here in the world, should have their recompense with him forever hereafter? Nothing can be more just, than that those who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, should receive that dreadful sentence at last, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

3. The punishment of the damned must be eternal, because of the immense guilt and infinite evil of sin. It is owned by common reason, that there ought to be a proportion between the quality of the offence and the degree of the punishment. Justice takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. It is a rule in all sorts of judicature, that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity in the person offended. Now, the majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. One act of sin

is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, the contradiction of his holiness, which is his peculiar glory, the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the heavens, and busied in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not observe what is done here below. And there is in it a defiance of his eternal power, and a provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he. O, what a dishonor is it to the God of glory, that proud dust should flee in his face, and control his authority! What a horrid provocation is it to the Most High, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the divine law and Lawgiver? From this it appears that sin is an infinite evil. There is in it a concurrence of impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness [deceitfulness; Ed.], and whatever may enhance a crime to an excess of wickedness. Now, sin being an infinite evil, the punishment of it must also be infinite; and because a creature is not able to bear a punishment infinite in degree, by reason of its finite and limited nature, therefore it must be infinite in its duration. And for this cause the punishment of the damned shall never have an end. The almighty power of God will continue them in their being, but they will curse and blaspheme that support, which shall be given them only to perpetuate their torments; and ten thousand times wish that God would destroy them once for all, and that they might forever shrink away into nothing. But that will never be granted to them. No; they shall not have so much as the comfort of dying, nor shall they escape the vengeance of God by annihilation.

4. Their punishment must be eternal: for they will remain forever unqualified for the least favor. The damned are not changed in hell, but continue their hatred and blasphemies against God. The seeds of this are in obstinate sinners here in the world, who are styled haters of God: but in the damned this hatred is direct and explicit; the fever is heightened into a frenzy. The glorious and ever-blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversion. Our Lord tells us, that in hell “there is weeping and gnashing of teeth,” i.e. extreme sorrow and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and withal are wicked and stubborn, they are enraged and irritated by their misery, and foam out blasphemies against the righteous Judge. We may apply to this purpose what is said of the worshippers of the beast: “They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds,” (Revelation 16:10-11). The torment and blasphemies of these impenitent idolaters are a true representation of the state of the damned. Now, as they will always sin; so they must always suffer. On these accounts, then, it is agreeable to the wisdom and justice of God that their pains and torments be eternal. But now it is time to shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. It is inconsistent with the nature of God to let sin go unpunished; or, vindictive justice is essential to God. To clear this, consider,

(1.) This is evident from the light of nature. For that God is just, is strongly and deeply stamped upon the minds of the children of men. Hence, when the barbarians saw the viper fasten upon Paul’s hand, they cried out that vengeance pursued him as a murderer, (Acts 28:4). The very instinct of nature told them, that there was a connection between guilt and punishment. To deny God to be just, is to offer violence to the principles of nature, to put a lie upon those notions which are born with and impressed upon our reason. It is to condemn conscience as a cheat, and all the terrors thereof as a false alarm. In a word, it is to eradicate all religion, and to open a floodgate to

all wickedness and impiety.

(2.) This appears from scripture assertions and examples. [1.] Consider scripture examples and declarations, such as: “Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged,” (Revelation 16:5). “The righteous judgment of God,” (Romans 2:5). “It is a righteous thing with God to recompense with tribulation,” (2 Thessalonians 1:6). “Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,” (Hebrews 2:2). “Our God is a consuming fire,” (Hebrews 12:29). “Knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death,” (Romans 1:32). “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:28). [2.] Think upon scripture examples, with respect to this matter. The angels, the flower and glory of the creation, the first-born of intelligent beings, when they revolted from their Maker, were doomed and cast into hell, where they lie reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the last day. Our first parents, and in them all their posterity, because of their apostasy, were sentenced to death and misery. The old world, except eight persons, were swept off the face of the earth, by a devouring deluge, on account of their impiety. Sodom and Gomorrah were by fire from heaven consumed to ashes, because of their vile uncleanness. The Egyptians sunk under multiplied plagues, because they hardened themselves against the Lord, and would not let Israel go. Yea, the Israelites themselves met with many severe judgments in the wilderness, in Canaan, and in Babylon, because they rebelled against the Lord their God. In a word, this people at last, for murdering the Messiah, and rejecting the gospel, were destroyed with a great destruction at the siege of Jerusalem, where eleven thousand perished by sword, famine, and pestilence, and very near a hundred thousand more were carried away captive.

(3.) This appears from the nature of God, which carries in it the utmost detestation of sin; and this necessarily produces punishment. “Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest,” (Psalms 11:6). Now the reason of all this holy severity is given in the very next verse, “For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” His holy nature prompts him to love righteousness, and consequently to hate and punish all unrighteousness.

(4.) It is evident from the nature of sin. What is sin but the offering of the highest indignity to the infinite and Supreme Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of mankind? It is an affronting of all his perfections, a reflection upon his wisdom, a contempt of his power, an insult to his holiness, a disparagement of his goodness, and an open defiance to his truth and faithfulness. If then sin be such an evil, an evil infinitely worse than we are capable to represent it, how can any imagine that God will forbear or neglect to punish such who obstinately live and die in the practice of it?

(5.) This will appear, if ye consider God as a Governor and Lawgiver. For his authority as such can never be preserved and maintained, if there be an universal impunity of criminal offences. Rebellion against Heaven would spread far and wide, devils and wicked men would grow absolutely unruly, the Divine Majesty and dominion would become contemptible, and his glorious sovereignty would be rendered vile and despicable, if bold offenders were not severely checked and punished for their enormities.

(6.) Consider, that if vindictive justice be not essential to God, it will be very hard, if not impossible, to give any tolerable account of the death and sufferings of Christ.

1. Is God infinitely just? Then there is a judgment to come. The justice of God requires that men should reap according to what they have sown; that it should be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. But it is not apparently so now in this present world. Here things are out of course; sin is rampant, and runs with a rapid violence. Many times the most guilty sinners are not punished in the present life; they not only escape the justice of men, but are under no conspicuous marks of the justice of God. As sinners prosper and flourish, so saints are wronged and oppressed. They are often cast in a right cause, and can meet with no justice on the earth; yea, the best men are often in the worst condition, and merely upon account of their goodness. They are borne down and oppressed, because they do not make resistance; and are loaded with sufferings many times, because they bear them with patience. And the reason of these dispensations is, because now is the time of God's patience and of our trial. Therefore there must be a day wherein the justice of God shall be made manifest. Then he will set all things right. He will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked. Then God shall have the glory of his justice, and his righteousness shall be openly vindicated. At the last day God's sword shall be drawn against offenders, and his justice shall be revealed before all the world. At that day all mouths shall be stopped, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamors of unjust men.

2. This lets us see how unlike to God many men are. Some have no justice at all. Though their place and office oblige them to it, they neither fear God nor regard man. Many times they pervert justice, they decree unrighteous decrees, (Isaiah 10:1). Many are unjust in their dealings; they trick, cheat, and defraud their neighbors; sometimes in using false weights, the balances of deceit are in their hands, (Hosea 12:7). Some hold the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other; they cozen, defraud, and cheat, under a specious profession of religion. Some adulterate their commodities; their wine is mixed with water, (Isaiah 1:22). They mix bad grain with good, and yet sell it for pure grain. There are many ways by which men deceive and impose upon their neighbors. All which show what a rare commodity justice is among them. But remember this is very unlike God. For he is the just and right one; he is righteous in all his ways. That man cannot possibly be godly who is not just. We are commanded to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. Though he doth not bid you be omnipotent, yet you ought to be just.

3. Is God infinitely just? Then we must not expostulate with or demand a reason of his actions. He hath not only authority on his side, but justice and equity. In all his dispensations towards men, however afflictive they be, he is just and righteous. He layeth judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, (Isaiah 28:17). It is below him to give an account to us of any of his proceedings. The plumb-line of our reason is too short to fathom the great depths of God's justice: for his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out, (Romans 11:33). We are to adore his justice, where we cannot see the reason of it. God's justice hath often been wronged, but never did wrong to any. How unreasonable, then, is it for men to expostulate with and dispute against God?

4. Is God infinitely just? Then the salvation of sinners who have believed in Christ are most secure, and they need not doubt of pardon and acceptance. "God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins," (1 John 1:9). God hath promised it, and he will not break his word; yea, he stands bound in justice to do it; for Christ hath satisfied his justice for all your sins who are believers, so that it hath nothing to crave of you. It doth not stand with the justice of God to exact the same debt from you. Your Redeemer did not only satisfy justice, but also merited the exercise of it on your behalf.

Hence it is that God is bound in justice to justify you upon your believing on Christ; for he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, (Romans 3:26). So that the thoughts even of divine justice, which are terrible to others, may be comfortable to believers.

5. Is God infinitely just? Then the destruction of wicked and impenitent sinners is infallibly certain. For the just God will by no means acquit the guilty. His justice, which is essential to him, cannot but take vengeance on you.

6. Lastly, However severely the Lord deals with us, he neither doth nor can do us any wrong; and therefore we should lay our hand on our mouth: “Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” (Lamentations 3:39).

Sixthly, The goodness of God is the next communicable attribute that falls to be considered. The divine goodness is that essential property whereby he is altogether good in himself, and the Author of all good to his creatures: Thou art good, and dost good, says the Psalmist, (Psalms 119:68). There is a twofold goodness of God; his absolute and his relative goodness.

1. There is an absolute goodness of God. This is that whereby he is conceived to be good in himself, without any relation to his creatures. God is thus good because his nature is infinitely perfect.

2. There is his relative goodness, by which we are to understand his bounty and benignity. As all fulness dwells in him, so he hath a strong inclination to let it out to his people on all occasions. The whole earth is full of his goodness, (Psalms 33:5). The goodness of God is manifested,

1. In creation. There is no other perfection of the divine nature so eminently visible in the whole book of the creatures as this is. His goodness was the cause that he made anything, and his wisdom was the cause that he made everything in order and harmony. Here the goodness of God shines with a, glorious lustre. All the varieties of the creatures which he hath made are so many beams and apparitions of his goodness. It was great goodness to communicate being to some things without himself, and to extract such a multitude of things from the depths of nothing, and to give life and breath to some of these creatures. Divine goodness formed their natures, beautified and adorned them with their several ornaments and perfections, whereby everything was enabled to act for the good of the common world. Every creature hath a character of divine goodness upon it. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim, this amiable perfection of God. But the goodness of God is manifested especially in the creation of man. He raised him from the dust by his almighty power, and placed him in a more sublime condition, and endued him with choicer prerogatives, than the rest of the creatures. What is man’s soul and body but like a cabinet curiously carved, with a rich and precious gem enclosed in it! God hath made him an abridgment of the whole creation: the links of the two worlds, heaven and earth, are united in him. He communicates with the earth in the dust of his body, and he participates with the heavens in the crystal of his soul. He has the life of angels in his reason, and that of animals in his sense. Further, the divine goodness is manifested in making man after his image, in furnishing the world with so many creatures for his use, in giving him dominion over the works of his hands, and making him lord of this lower world.

2. In our redemption by Jesus Christ. O what astonishing goodness was it for the great and glorious God to give his only begotten Son to the death for such vile rebels and enemies as we all

are by nature! The goodness of God, under the name of his love, is rendered as the only cause of our redemption by Christ: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life,” (John 3:16). This is an inexpressible so, a so that all the angels of heaven cannot analyze. None can conceive or understand the boundless extent and dimensions of it. God gave Christ for us to commend his love, and set it off with an admirable lustre. “God commended his love towards us (saith the apostle), in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.” O what an expensive goodness and love was this! Our redemption cost God more than what was laid out on the whole creation. “The redemption of the soul is precious,” says the Psalmist. “We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” Here God parted with his richest jewel, and with the eternal delight of his soul. This cost Christ dear. The Sun of righteousness behooved to be eclipsed, and must vail the beams of his divine glory. He made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of sinful flesh. He did not appear in worldly pomp and magnificence, attended with a splendid retinue, and faring deliciously, but in a mean and low condition, without a settled dwelling-place, and was exposed to poverty and reproach. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The last scene of his life was most painful. Upon the very apprehension of his last sufferings it is said, “he began to be sorrowful,” as if he had been a stranger to grief till then. Be endured with unparalleled patience all that wrath and misery that his people deserved to have suffered for ever in hell. O what a dreadful deluge of wrath and fiery indignation fell from heaven upon our ark, of which that of Noah was only but a type! He was bruised and ground to powder as it were in his agony in the garden. O how did his innocent soul boil under the fire of divine wrath! His blood brake through every pore of the vessel, by the extremity of that flame. God spared not his own Son, but dealt with him in extreme severity. He paid the utmost mite of satisfaction for his people’s sins that justice could demand. O what admirable love and goodness is manifested here!

3. In his providential conduct and government. Here we must distinguish a twofold goodness of God, common and special.

(1.) There is God’s common goodness, which is common to all the creatures. “God is good to all,” says the Psalmist. All the creatures taste of his goodness. He preserves them in their beings, continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. “O Lord, thou preservest man and beast,” says David. He visits us every day and makes us feel the effects of his goodness, in “giving us rain and fruitful seasons,” and filling our hearts with food and gladness. He waters the ground with his showers, and everyday shines with new beams of his goodness.

(2.) There is a, special goodness of God to his own people, whom he privileges with spiritual and saving blessings. His goodness to them is truly wonderful, in pardoning their iniquities, healing their spiritual diseases, sanctifying their natures, hearing and answering their prayers, bearing with their infirmities, accepting their imperfect services, supporting them under and delivering them from temptations, solving their doubts, directing and guiding them in their difficulties.

4. The goodness of God will be most signally manifested at the last day. It is laid up in heaven, (Psalms 31:19). O who can tell how great goodness is laid up there? In heaven they shall have draughts of his goodness, even as much as they can hold. There God will be all in all to them, and

communicate himself to them immediately, without the intervention of ordinances.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. God is a merciful God, and delights in mercy, “His tender mercies are over all his works,” (Psalms 145:9). There can be no case so bad as to be above or beyond the reach of mercy, to such as come to him in his own way, (Isaiah 55:7) seeing his goodness is infinite. The difference between the goodness and mercy of God is, that mercy respects only the miserable, but goodness extends to the happy also.

Object. But how is the severity of God against the wicked, and the godly too, consistent with that infinite goodness?

Ans. It is the property of goodness to hate and punish sin. Hence the Lord said to Moses, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy,” (Exodus 33:19). Compare, “Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty,” (Exodus 34:7). The afflictions of the godly are the effect of the divine goodness, and effect goodness in them. Hence says the apostle, “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,” (Hebrews 12:6). And says the psalmist, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes,” (Psalms 119:71).

2. God can fully satisfy the desire of the soul, and in him it may rest with complacency and delight. He is all-sufficient in and to himself, and all his creatures. And this bountiful God should be the centre of our affections, desires, and joys. We should be restless and uneasy till we find him, and earnestly long for the rich manifestations of his love and grace.

3. This doctrine of the divine goodness should strongly recommend to us those hard lessons prescribed by our Lord, and which he urges upon his followers from the consideration of his own goodness and beneficence: “Love your enemies,” (Matthew 5:44-45) &c.

4. Abuse not the divine goodness. This is a great evil, and it is very frequent and common. It began in the first ages of the world, yea, it commenced a few minutes after the creation, and it continues to this very day. O abuse not the goodness of God, by forgetting his benefits, murmuring and repining at your lot and situation in the world, or by taking liberty to sin because of his goodness.

5. Seek not your happiness in created things and enjoyments, but in an ever-bountiful God, who is the spring and source of all goodness and mercy, and who can fully satisfy all the desires of an immortal soul.

Seventhly, The last communicable attribute of God to be taken notice of is his truth, which is that perfection of his nature whereby he is faithful, and free from all falsehood. Hence he is called “the God that cannot lie,” (Titus 1:2). He is true in himself: “A God of truth, and without iniquity,” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Now God is true,

1. In his works both of creation and providence; and that both in his common and more ordinary works of providence, in preserving and governing the creatures; and extraordinary ones, such as the glorious work of redemption, his great and miraculous operations, and the wonderful preservations of and deliverances granted to his church and people when exposed to the greatest dangers. God is true in all these; “The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness,” (Psalms 111:7-8). “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth,” (Psalms 25:10). It is a part of the church’s song, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints,” (Revelation 15:3). “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments,” (Revelation 16:7). All God’s works are true and real things, not chimeras or appearances. He executes true judgments, grants true deliverances, works true miracles; his mercies are true mercies, and his comforts are true comforts. He does not deceive or delude his people with vain shows and appearances.

2. In his word. His word is most pure truth. “Thy word is truth,” says our Saviour, (John 17:17). And,

(1.) God is true in all the doctrines which he hath revealed. There is no flaw nor corruption in any of them. They are all the true form of sound words. And especially he is true in the doctrines of the gospel. Hence we read of the “truth of the gospel,” (Galatians 2:5); and the gospel is called “the word of truth,” (Ephesians 1:13). Some of the doctrines revealed there are above the reach of human reason, as the doctrines of the glorious and adorable Trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, and the mystical union between him and believers. But though they cannot be comprehended by reason, they are not contrary to it.

(2.) In the historical narratives which he hath recorded in his word, as those of the creation, the fall of man, the drowning of the old world with the deluge, the incarnation of Christ, the many miracles which he wrought, his life and bloody death, &c. In these and other historical relations which we have in the word of God, there is no lie nor mistake at all. Hence Luke says, in his preface to his history, “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightst know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed,” (Luke 1:3-4).

(3.) In his prophetical predictions. None of them fail or come short of their accomplishment, but are all fulfilled in their season. A man may foretell such things as depend on natural causes, as rain and snow, heat and cold, the eclipses of the sun and moon, &c. But things are foretold in the scriptures which are merely contingent, depending upon the free grace of God, or the free will of man, as the rejecting of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, &c. None of its predictions have fallen to the ground. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away. The Lord tells the prophet, “The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie,” (Habakkuk 2:3). And after divers prophetical predictions, it is said, “These sayings are faithful and true,” (Revelation 22:6).

(4.) In his commands. All his commands are faithful, and his law is truth. All his precepts which he has given us are counterparts of his own heart, real copies of his approving will. The matter of them is exactly consonant to his holiness, and most acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight. God approves of all that he commands: so that his precepts are a true and perfect rule of holiness,

without any flaw or defect.

(5.) In his threatenings. They are always accomplished in their season; not one of them shall fail. Says the Lord to the Jews, by the prophet, “Did not my word take hold of your fathers,” (Zechariah 1:6). And the apostle Paul tells us, “We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things,” (Romans 2:2). It is true, indeed, some threatenings are conditional, and to be understood with the exception of repentance; so that unfeigned repentance and reformation prevent the execution of them; as is clear in the case of Nineveh: “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them,” (Jeremiah 18:7-8). But divine threatenings will surely be executed upon impenitent and incorrigible sinners.

(6.) In his promises. All the promises are yea and amen, i.e. there shall be an infallible accomplishment of them. Therefore promised blessings are called sure mercies, (Isaiah 55:3). And the gospel, which is the compend of all the promises, is often called the word of truth. God’s people have found the truth of the promises many times in their comfortable experience. Says Joshua to the Israelites, “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). Joshua was now about to die, and therefore could not be supposed to feign and dissemble; and he appeals to their own consciences, “Ye know,” &c. And Solomon speaks to the same purpose: “Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant,” (1 Kings 8:56). All the promises which he hath made to his people shall have their accomplishment in due time. Now, the truth of God is most frequently taken in this sense in scripture, and in this his faithfulness doth peculiarly consist.

And, [1.] This truth and faithfulness of God shines with peculiar luster in accomplishing the many promises recorded in the holy scriptures; such as that made to Abraham concerning his seed, that, after their sojourning in a strange land four hundred and thirty years, they should come out again with great substance; which was punctually fulfilled, as Moses tells us, “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 from the land of Egypt,” (Exodus 12:41). Such also was the accomplishment of the promise relating to the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity after seventy years. No length of time nor distance of place can wear the remembrance of his promise from the divine mind. “He remembered his holy promise,” says the Psalmist, “and Abraham his servant,” (Psalms 105:42).

[2.] In accomplishing the promises concerning the Messiah. So it is said, Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; grace in regard of our pardon, and truth in regard of the promise of God. This appears in performing the promise of Christ’s incarnation after so many revolutions of time, and many expectations of his coming, and many contrary appearances, and long stay of four thousand years after the first promise. After all this, God made good his word, by sending his Son into the world. —It appears in performing the promise of his death and sufferings. God passed his word to the church, that his Son should suffer death and the wrath of God for elect sinners. And having

once passed his word for this, he would not spare him. Rather than God should break his word, his own dear Son must suffer a painful, shameful, and cursed death in his body, and the wrath of God in his innocent soul. —It appears in performing the promise of his resurrection from the dead. God had said, he would not leave his soul in hell, [the state of the dead], nor suffer his holy One to see corruption. This prophecy and promise was accordingly fulfilled: for he was raised from the dead in solemn triumph. Angels attended his resurrection, and the earth trembled and shook, as a sign of triumph and a token of victory; by which Christ intimated to the whole world, that he had overcome death in his own dominions, and lifted up his, head as a glorious conqueror over all his enemies. It was promised that he should rise from the dead on the third day; and this was made good to a tittle.

(3.) In fulfilling his promises, when great difficulties and seeming improbabilities lay in the way of their accomplishment. Thus God promised to give Abraham a son, and he made it good, though Sarah was barren, and both Abraham and she were past age. Again, he brought back the captives from Babylon, though the thing seemed most improbable, and many great difficulties lay in the way. Difficulties are for men, not for God. “Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?” (Genesis 18:14; see Zechariah 8:6). He is not tied to the road of human probabilities. He will turn nature upside-down, rather than not be as good as his word.

(4.) In fulfilling promises to his people, when their hopes and expectations have been given up; (See instances, Ezekiel 37:11; Isaiah 49:14). There may be much unbelief in good men, their faith may be sorely staggered. Yet God is faithful and true. Men may question his promise, but God cannot deny himself, (2 Timothy 2:13).

(5.) God’s truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is confirmed by testimonies given to it by the saints in all ages. They have all set to their seal that God is true. They have all borne witness for God, and attested his unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come; (See instances, Deuteronomy 7:9; Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56; Psalms 146:6). All learned men are for experiments: now, the saints in all ages have made experiments upon God’s word of promise, and have always found him to be true and faithful. “The word of the Lord is tried,” says the Psalmist. None that relied on his promise were ever disappointed. We may here also take a short view of the grounds of God’s faithfulness. There are divers glorious attributes and perfections of the divine nature, upon which his truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built, as so many strong and unshaken pillars.

As, 1. His perfect knowledge of all things past. His knowledge is called “book of remembrance,” (Malachi 3:16), to signify the continual presence of all things past before him. Men do often break their word, because they forget their promise; but forgetfulness cannot befall a God of infinite knowledge. He will ever be mindful of his covenant, and remember his holy covenant and promises, as the Psalmist speaks.

2. His immutability. Though men in making promises may have a real purpose to perform them, yet they may afterwards change their mind. But God is always firm to his purpose, and cannot change his mind, because of his unchangeable nature, (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). Again men are often inconsiderate in making promises, and do often meet with what they did not foresee, but all events are eternally foreseen by God. So all his promises are made with infinite wisdom and judgment. To this purpose is that promise, “I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth

thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies," (Hosea 2:19).

3. His power. Whatsoever he hath promised to his people, he is able to perform it. Sometimes men falsify their promise, and cannot make good their word through a defect of power. But God never out-promised himself. He can do whatsoever he pleased to do. It is said, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth," (Psalms 135:6) &c. Yea, all things are possible with God. This was the foundation of Abraham's faith, which kept it from staggering at the thoughts of the improbabilities which lay in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, (Romans 4:21). In the case of civil debts, many a man cannot keep his promise, because others break to him. But though the whole creation should break, God is as able as ever. Hence the prophet says, "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). Believers in Christ can never be undone, though the whole creation should disband and go into ruin.

4. His holiness. Some men are so wicked and malicious, that though they can yet they will not keep their word. But it is not so with God. He cannot be charged with any wickedness; for there is no unrighteousness in him, (Psalms 92:15) by reason of the perfect holiness of his nature. It is impossible for him to lie. The deceitfulness and treachery that is to be found in men, flows from the corruption that is lodged in their hearts: but the divine nature is infinitely pure and holy. "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

5. His justice and righteousness. A man by virtue of a promise hath a right to the thing promised; so that it is his due; and justice requires to give everyone his due. So God by his promise makes himself a debtor, and his justice obliges him to pay. Hence it is said, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," (1 John 1:9). He is faithful to pardon, as he hath promised it; and faithful in keeping promise, because he is just. Though it was his goodness and mercy to make the promise, yet his justice binds him to make it good. It is true, when God makes himself a debtor by his promise, it is indeed a debt of grace; yet it is a debt which it is just for God to pay. Therefore his word of promise is called "the word of his righteousness," (Psalms 119:123).

6. The glory and honor of his name may give us full assurance of his faithfulness in making good his promises. He doth all things for his own glory; and therefore, wherever you find a promise, the honor of God is given as security for the performance of it. Hence his people plead this as a mighty argument to work for them. So, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name" q.d. "O Lord, thy honour is a thousand times more valuable than our lives. It is of little importance what become of us. But, O! it is of infinite importance that the glory of thy name be secured, and thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world." We find Moses pleading to the same purpose, "Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people;" "It will be sad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon thy people; But infinitely worse for the tongues of the Egyptians

to fall upon thy name," (Exodus 32:11-12). In a word, the glory of all God's attributes is engaged for the performance of his promises, especially his faithfulness and power. Now, these are strong pillars upon which God's truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built. He can as soon cease to be omniscient, unchangeable, omnipotent, infinitely just and holy, as he can cease to be true and faithful. He can as soon divest himself of his glory, and draw an eternal veil over all the shining perfections and excellencies of his nature, as cease to be faithful and true. But it is high time to finish this subject.

Inf. 1. Is God infinitely true? Then all hypocrisy and dissimulation, all falsehood and dishonesty, all lying, cheating, and double dealing, is most hateful to God, is most opposite to his holy nature, and flows from the devil and our lusts, as father and mother to them, (John 8:44).

2. This lets us see what a sure foundation we have for our faith in believing the truth of what is revealed in the holy scriptures; for they are the word of the God of truth, the word of God that cannot lie. The truth of God is an immoveable rock, upon which we may safely venture our salvation. The public faith of heaven is engaged for the happiness of believers; and can they ever have better security? The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power; and shall not our faith hang upon the word of God's truth? There is nothing else we can rest upon, but the truth and faithfulness of God. We cannot trust in an arm of flesh, for this will fail us in the time of our need; nor can we trust in our own hearts, for the Spirit of God tells us that he that doth so is a fool. All other things are sandy foundations, which cannot abide the storm and trial: but the truth of God is an immoveable rock that cannot be shaken.

3. Hence we see that the reformed Protestant religion is the only true religion that is in the world, because it is built upon the infallible truth and veracity of God. We have reason to be thankful to God, that it is not built upon such sandy foundations as human unwritten traditions, or any human testimony whatsoever. It is built upon the God of truth, and not upon fallible men. We admit the testimony of the church as an help to our faith, but not as the ground and foundation of it. The precious truths which we believe, we receive them not upon the testimony of the churches, Popes, or councils, but upon the testimony of the God of truth that cannot lie. But the Popish religion hath no sure foundation. The faith of Papists is built upon the testimony of men; so that their religion hath no more certainty in it, than these men have of infallibility.

4. Hence we may see matter of dreadful terror to all the wicked; for all the threatenings and curses of the law of a faithful God stand in full force against them and will at last overwhelm them with rapid fury, if they do not fly to the mercy and grace of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, who by his obedience unto death satisfied all the demands of law and justice, in the room of all who will take the benefit of his undertaking. Though in their atheistical unbelief they may bless themselves, saying, that they shall have peace, though they walk in the imagination of their hearts, to add drunkenness unto thirst; yet the Lord will not spare them, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will smoke against them, and all the curses that are written in his holy book shall light upon them; yea his wrathful vengeance, like an overflowing scourge, shall sweep them off the sinful stage of time into the depths of the devouring pit, where is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

5. Lastly, Imitate God in this his adorable perfection, by "speaking the truth in love," (Ephesians 4:15). Let the strictest rules of truth and sincerity be observed by you in all your dealings and

intercourse with men. Lay aside all lying, falsehood, and dissimulation, all equivocations and secret reservations in your words and promises, and speak the truth every man with his neighbor. Thus we have given you a short description of what God is. Imperfect it is, and imperfect it must be, seeing he is incomprehensible. Do ye study to believe what is taught you of God, and apply to him, through the Son of his love, for further discoveries of his glorious perfections and excellencies; and at length ye shall see him as he is, having a more enlarged and extensive knowledge of him, his nature and ways; though even then ye will not be able to comprehend him. For it was a wise and judicious answer of one that was asked, What God is? that if he knew that fully, he should be a god himself. And indeed that being which we can comprehend, cannot be God, because he is infinite. O study God and ye will increase in the knowledge of him.

02.02. Of the Holy Trinity

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. In 1 John 5:5, John lays down a fundamental article of the christian faith, that Jesus is the Son of God; and brings in the witnesses of this truth, 1 John 5:7-8. The text condescends on the divine heavenly witness. Where, consider, 1. Their number, three, viz. three persons.

2. Their names, the Father, the Word, that is, the Son so called, because he reveals the Father's mind, and the Holy Ghost. And here is noted the order of their subsisting also.

3. The majesty and glory of these witnesses; they are in heaven, manifesting their glory there, and from it have borne record; which should make the inhabitants of the world to believe their testimony.

4. Their act: They bear record to this truth.

5. Their unity: They are one, one God; not only one in consent and agreement, but one thing, one substance, one essence. The doctrine evidently arising from the words is,

Doctrine: "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." In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall, I. Explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, the Godhead, and a person.

II. Show that there are three persons in the Godhead.

III. Prove that these three are distinct persons.

IV. Demonstrate that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

V. Evince the weight and importance of this article of the Christian faith.

VI. Lastly, Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, the Godhead, and a person.

1. By the Godhead is meant the nature or essence of God, (Acts 17:29), even as by manhood is understood the nature of man. Now the Godhead is but one, there being but one God.

2. A divine person, or a person in the Godhead, is the Godhead distinguished by personal properties, where Christ the Son of God is called "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," (Hebrews 1:3). For consider the Godhead as the fountain or principle of the Deity, so it is the first person; consider it as begotten of the Father, it is the second; and as proceeding from the Father and the Son, it is the third person.

II. Our next business is to show that there are three persons in the Godhead. This is confirmed by the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament.

1. The Old Testament plainly holds forth a plurality of persons in the Godhead; “God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness,” (Genesis 1:26). “And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,” (Genesis 3:22). This cannot be understood of angels: for man is said to be created after the image of God, but never after the image of angels; and the temptation was, “Ye shall be as gods,” not as angels. Nor must it be conceived, that God speaks so after the manner of kings; for that way of speaking is used rather to note modesty than royalty. But when God speaks so as to discover most of his royalty, he speaks in the singular number, as in the giving of the law, “I am the Lord thy God.” This trinity of persons is also not obscurely mentioned in Psalms 33:6; “By the Word of the Lord, or JEHOVAH, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth.” Here is mention made of Jehovah the Word and the Spirit, as jointly acting in the work of creation. Accordingly we find, that “all things were made by the Word,” (John 1:3) and that “the Spirit garnished the heavens,” (Job 26:13). Nay, a Trinity of persons is mentioned, where, besides that the Lord, or Jehovah, is three times spoken of, we read, of “the angel of his presence,” (Isaiah 63:7) which denotes two persons, and “his Spirit,” (Isaiah 63:9-10). So that it evidently appears, that the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament most plainly teaches this doctrine.

(1.) I begin with the text, where it is expressly asserted, There are three that bear record, &c. Here are three witnesses, and therefore three persons. Not three names of one person: for if a person have ever so many names, he is still but one witness. Not three Gods, but one.

(2.) In the baptism of Christ, (Matthew 3:16-17) mention is made of the Father speaking in an audible voice, the Son in the human nature baptized by John, and the holy Ghost appearing in the shape of a dove; plainly importing three divine persons.

(3.) This appears from our baptism, “Go ye and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” (Matthew 28:8, Matthew 28:19). Observe the words, in the name, not names; which denotes, that these three are one God: and yet they are three distinct persons.

(4.) It appears from the Apostolical benediction, where all blessings are sought from the three persons distinctly mentioned, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all,” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

III. That these three are distinct persons, (for though they cannot be divided, yet they are distinguished), is evident. For the Son is distinct from the Father, “being the express image of his person,” (Hebrews 1:2). He reckons his Father one witness and himself another, (John 8:17-18). And that the Holy Ghost is distinct from both, appears from “I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth,” (John 14:16-17). And the text is plain for the distinction of all three. Now, they are distinguished by their order of subsisting, and their incommunicable personal properties. In respect of the order of subsistence, the Father is the first person, as the fountain of the Deity, having the foundation of personal subsistence in himself; the Son is the second person, and the Holy Ghost is the third

person, as having the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son. And so for their personal properties,

It is the personal property of the Father to begat the Son; “Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom,” (Hebrews 1:5-6, Hebrews 1:8). This cannot be ascribed either to the Son or Holy Ghost.

2. It is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father; “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father….no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,” (John 1:14, John 1:18)

3. The property of the Holy Ghost is to proceed from the Father and the Son; “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedth from the Father, he shall testify of me,” (John 15:26). In Galatians 4:6 He is called “the Spirit of the Son ;” and in Romans 8:9 “The Spirit of Christ.” He is said to “receive all things from Christ,” (John 16:14-15); To be “sent by Him,” (John 15:26): And to be “sent by the Father in Christ’s name” (John 14:26). All this plainly implies, that the Holy Spirit proceedth both from the Father and the Son. This generation of the Son and Holy Ghost was from all eternity. For as God is from everlasting to everlasting, so must this generation and procession be: and to deny it, would be to deny the supreme and eternal Godhead of all the three glorious persons.

IV. I proceed to show, that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. To this end consider,

1. How express the text is, These three are one. When the apostle speaks of the unity of the earthly witnesses, he says, they “agree in one,” (1 John 5:8) acting in unity of consent or agreement only. But the heavenly witnesses are one, viz. in nature or essence. They are not only of a like nature or substance, but one and the same substance; and if so, they are and must be equal in all essential perfections, as power and glory.

2. There is but one God, as was before proved, and there can be but one God. Now, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them the true God; and therefore they are one God, the same in substance; equal in power and glory. And this I shall prove by scripture testimony.

First, That the Father is true God, none that acknowledge a God do deny. Divine worship and attributes are ascribed to him. But, Secondly That the Son is true God, appears if ye consider,

1. The scriptures expressly calls him God, (Romans 9:5. John 1:1. Acts 20:28); “the true God” (1 John 5:20); “the great God” (Titus 2:13); “the mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6); “Jehovah or Lord” (Malachi 3:1); which is a name proper to the true God only, (Psalms 83:1-18).

2. The attributes of God, which are one and the same with God himself, are ascribed to him; as eternity; “Whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting,” (Micah 5:2); independence and omnipotence; “The almighty,” (Revelation 1:8); omnipresence, (John 3:13); where he is said to be “in heaven,” when bodily on earth; and “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world,” (Matthew 28:20); omniscience, “Lord thou knowest all things,” (John 21:17); says Peter to

him; and unchangeableness: “They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail,” (Hebrews 1:11-12).

3. The works proper and peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made,” (John 1:3). Conservation of all things, “upholding all things by the word of his power,” (Hebrews 1:3). Raising the dead by his own power and at his own pleasure; “The Son quickeneth whom he will,” (John 5:21). The Father “hath given to the Son to have life in himself,” (John 5:26). The saving of sinners; “I will save them by the Lord their God,” (Hosea 1:7). Compare Hosea 13:9. “in me is thine help.” Yea, whatsoever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise.

4. Divine worship is due him, and therefore he is the true God. The angels are commanded to “worship him,” (Matthew 4:10). All must give the same honor to him as to the father, (John 5:23). We must have faith in him, and they are blessed that believe in him, (Psalms 2:12; compare Jeremiah 17:5). We are to pray to him, (Acts 7:59) and we are baptised in his name, (Matthew 28:19). Nay, he is expressly said to be “equal with the Father,” (Php 2:6) and “one with him,” (John 10:30). Now, seeing God will “not give his glory to another,” (Isaiah 48:11) because he is true and cannot lie, and he is just, it follows, that though Christ be a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from his Father, but one God with him, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And it is no contradiction to this doctrine when Christ says, “My Father is greater than I,” (John 14:28) for he is not speaking there of his nature as God, but of his mediatory office; and hence he is called the Father’s “servant,” (Isaiah 42:1).

Thirdly, That the Holy Ghost is true God, or a divine person, appears, if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him God, (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Isaiah 6:9; compare with Acts 28:25-26; 2 Samuel 23:2-3). He is called “Jehovah, or the Lord,” (Numbers 12:6. compare 2 Peter 1:21).

2. Divine attributes are ascribed to him; as omnipotence, he “worketh all in all,” (1 Corinthians 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:9-11); omnipresence, (Psalms 139:7) and omniscience, (1 Corinthians 2:10).

3. Works peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, (Psalms 33:6); conservation, (Psalms 104:30); working miracles, (Matthew 12:28); raising the dead, (Romans 8:11); inspiring the prophets, (2 Timothy 3:16; compare 2 Peter 1:21).

4. Divine worship is due to him. We are baptized in his name, (Matthew 28:19); we are to pray to him, (2 Corinthians 13:14; Acts 4:23, Acts 4:25; compare 2 Samuel 23:2-3). That the Godhead is not divided, but that each of the three divine persons hath the one whole Godhead, or divine nature.

2. That it is sinful to imagine any inequality amongst the three persons, or to think one of them more honorable than another, seeing they are all one God.

V. I proceed to consider the weight and importance of this article. It is a fundamental article, the belief whereof is necessary to salvation. For those that are, “without God,” (Ephesians 2:12) and “have not the Father,” cannot be saved; but whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,”

(1 John 2:23). Those that are none of Christ's cannot be saved; but "he that hath not the Spirit, is none of his," (Romans 8:9). None receive the Spirit but those that know him, (John 14:17). This mystery of the Trinity is so interwoven with the whole of religion, that there can neither be any true faith, right worship, or obedience without it. For take away this doctrine, and the object of faith, worship, and obedience is changed; seeing the object of these declared in the scripture, is the three persons in the Godhead; and the scriptures know no other God. Where is faith, if this be taken away? "This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent," (John 17:3). Here it is to observed, that our Lord does not call the Father only the true God, exclusive of the other persons of the Trinity; but that he (including the other persons who all subsist in the same one undivided essence) is the only true God, in opposition to idols, falsely called gods. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father," (1 John 2:23). There is no more true worship or fellowship with God in it: "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father," (Ephesians 2:18). And there is no more obedience without it; "He that hath me," says Christ, "hateth my Father also," (John 15:23). "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him," (John 5:23).

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. How much ought we to prize divine revelation, wherein we have a discovery of this incomprehensible mystery! This is a truth which nature's light could never have found out. It is above reason, though not contrary to it; for reason, though it could never have brought it to light, yet when it is discovered, it must needs yield to it; for as the judgment of sense must be corrected by reason, so judgment of reason by faith.

2. See here that God whom you are to take for your God, to love, trust in, worship and obey, even the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is that God who offers himself to you in the gospel, and whom you are to take for your God in Christ. This is that Father who elected a select company of sinners unto salvation; this is that Son that redeemed them unto God by his blood; and this is that Spirit that renews and sanctifies them, making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

3. Lastly, Take this Father for your Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and be obedient children, if ye would be reckoned of his seed. Receive the Son, and slight him not. Give your consent to the gospel-offer, seeing it is your Maker that offers to be your husband. And grieve not the Holy Spirit, lest ye be found fighters against God.

02.03. Of the Providence of God

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” (Matthew 10:29). Our Lord is here encouraging his disciples against all the troubles and distresses they might meet with in their way, and particularly against the fear of men, by the consideration of the providence of God, which reaches unto the meanest of things, sparrows and the hairs of our head. Sparrows are of a mean price and small value; and yet, for as mean as they are, God preserves them, guides and disposes of all things concerning them, so that one of them cannot fall to the ground by shot or any other way, without his sovereign ordering and disposal. The instruction deducible from the text is, Doctrine. “There is a providence that extends itself to the least of things. In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall.

I. Show that there is a providence.

II. Consider its object.

III. Explain the acts thereof.

IV. Consider its properties.

V. Lastly,. make improvement.

I. I am to show that there is a providence. This appears, From plain scripture-testimonies; as Psalms 103:19. “His kingdom ruleth over all.” (Acts 17:28). “In him we live, and move, and have our being,” (Ephesians 1:11). “Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Providence is also held forth by a threefold scripture-emblem. Chiefly, (1.) Mount Moriah, which upon occasion of the miraculous preservation of Isaac, and a ram to be put in his room in order to be sacrificed, was called JEHOVAH JIREH, i.e. The Lord will provide, (Genesis 22:14). (3.) Ezekiel wheels, where there was a wheel in the middle of a wheel, denoting the agency of the first cause, and the superintending and directing providence of God, (Ezekiel 1:1-28). From the nature of God, who being independent, and the first cause of all things, the creatures must needs depend upon him in their being and working. He is the end of all things, wise, knowing how to manage all for the best; powerful to effectuate whatever he has purposed; and faithful to accomplish all he has decreed, promised, or threatened. From the harmony and order of the most confused things in the world. Every thing appears to a discerning eye to be wisely ordered, notwithstanding the confusions that seem to take place. What would become of the world, if there were not a providence seeing men that despise all order, and would fain give loose reins to their lusts and unbridled inclinations, are always the greatest party. and would overpower and destroy the smaller and most virtuous party? Herein the truth of providence clearly appears. The extraordinary judgments that have pursued and been inflicted upon wicked men, and the remarkable deliverances that have been granted to the church and people of God in all ages, do loudly proclaim a providence. From the fulfillment of prophecies, which could not possibly be without a providence to bring them to pass.

II. Let us, in the next place, consider the object of providence, or that which it reacheth and extendeth to. And this is all the creatures, and all their actions, (Hebrews 1:3). —“Upholding all things by the word of his power,” (Psalms 103:19). “His kingdom ruleth over all.” The angels are subject to this providence, (Nehemiah 9:6). “Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.” So are also the devils, these infernal spirits, (Matthew 8:31), “If thou cast us out (said they to Jesus), suffer us to go away unto the herd of swine.” It reacheth natural things, as clouds, snow, winds, &c. as appears from Psalms 104:1-35 and Psalms 147:1-20 and from daily observation. Casual things are ordered by providence, as lots, (Proverbs 16:33). “The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” So in the case of accidental manslaughter, (Exodus 21:13). “If a man lie not in wait, and God deliver him into his hand.” There is nothing so mean but providence extends to it, such as the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our head. It is God that feeds the fowls and the young ravens that cry. He clothes the lilies and grass of the field, that have no hand of man about them. He made lice, frogs, &c. a plague to scourge Pharaoh and his people, worms to eat up Herod, &c. In a special manner providence is conversant about man, forming him in the womb, “Hast thou not poured me out as milk (says Job), and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with flesh and hast fenced me with bones and sinews,” (Job 10:10-11). --bringing him forth out of his mother’s bowels, and holding him up thereafter, (Psalms 71:6). His heart is in the Lord’s hand, and all his thoughts and inclinations are under his control, (Proverbs 21:1). He directs and orders all his steps. The most free acts of the creature’s will are governed by superintending providence. All their good actions, (John 15:5). “Without me ye can do nothing.” So also their evil actions, (Acts 4:27-28). “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done,” (Genesis 45:7). “God sent me before you,” says Joseph to his brethren, though they had wickedly sold him into Egypt.

III. I proceed to consider the acts of providence. They are two, preserving and governing the creatures and their actions.

God by his providence preserves all the creatures. This preservation of the creatures is an act of providence, whereby they are preserved in their being and power of acting, (Hebrews 1:3). “Upholding all things by the word of his power.” In this God sometimes makes use of means, and sometimes acts without means. We have both described, (Hosea 2:21-22). “I will hear saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.” He preserves the heavens immediately, the earth, the corn, the wine, and the oil, &c. mediately. And thus by this providence he provides all things necessary for the preservation of all things; (Psalms 145:15-16). “The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thing hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” This act of providence is so necessary, that nothing could subsist one moment without it. For there is no necessary connection betwixt the being of the creatures this moment and their being the next; and as they could not give themselves a being, so they cannot continue it, but must be upheld by God as a ball in the air, (Hebrews 1:3). There is a continual efflux of providence necessary for preserving and upholding the creatures in their being, otherwise

they would be independent, and could preserve themselves, which is grossly absurd.

God does not only preserve the creatures, but governs and manages them, which is the second act of providence; whereby he disposes of all things, persons, and actions, according to his will, (Proverbs 21:1). “The King’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will, (Proverbs 16:33). “The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord,” (Proverbs 16:9). “A man’s heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps.” And this act of providence is also necessary: for as the creature cannot be or exist without God, so neither can it act without him, (Acts 17:21). “For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” God does not make man as the carpenter doth the ship, which afterwards sails without him; but he rules and guides him, sitting at the helm, to direct and order all his motions: so that whatever men do, they do nothing without him: not only in their good actions, where he gives grace, and excites it, working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure: but also in their evil actions, wherein they are under the hand of Providence, but in a very different manner. For understanding this point, how the providence of God reacheth to and is concerned in sinful actions, we are to consider, that God neither puts evil into the hearts of men, not stirs them up to it: for, says the apostle, (James 1:13). “God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man.” And therefore he is not the author of sin. But,

God permits sin, when he does not hinder it, which he is not obliged to do. not that it falls our so as he cannot hinder it, for he is omnipotent, and can do all things; nor yet as if he cared not what fell out in the world; but he does wisely, for his holy ends, efficaciously will not to hinder it; Hence we read, (Acts 14:16). that “God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” He does not permit sin, for that he will not violate or force the creature’s free will; for God’s providence offers no violence to the will of the creature; and if so, he should never hinder sin at all, for the same reason. But certainly he has holy ends in the permission of sin: for thereby his justice, mercy, wisdom, and love, in sending his Son to save sinners, do conspicuously appear, which otherwise would have been under an eternal cloud, hid from the view of men and angels. For further illustration of this doctrine relating to the concern of providence in sinful+ actions, we are to consider them in a twofold respect, as simple actions, or natural actions of the creature, abstract from any obliquity or deformity cleaving to them; and as actions having irregularity and pravity in them. Considered as natural actions of the creature, they are all effected by the providence of God, which cooperates with, and enables the creature to produce them, in such a manner that without the efflux of providence the creature could not move a hand or foot, or perform any action whatever; “for in him we move:” and no action of the creature simply considered, or as a natural action, can be sinful, but has a goodness of being in it, and is effected by the influence of providence. As to the pravity or sin that is in actions, as God decreed the futurition of sin, or permitted it to take place, and did not hinder it; so all the sin or vitiosity that is in actions proceeds entirely from the creature, and the evil lusts and passions that are in his heart.

Thus a man’s taking up a stone, and throwing it, is a natural action, which the providence of God enable him to perform; but his throwing it at another man with an intention to kill him, is permitted by God, otherwise it could not take place; for if a hair cannot fall form our head without the providence of God, much less can a man be murdered without it: and the killing of the man by the throwing of the stone, proceeds entirely from the malice and wickedness that was in the heart of the murderer, the operation of which God did not hinder, which he is nowise obliged to do.

God leaves the sinner so far as he sees meet to the swing of his own lusts, and denies him restraining grace. Thus it is said of Hezekiah, a godly king, that, “in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart,” (2 Chronicles 32:31). And when the restraint is taken off the sinner, he runs furiously, to evil.

God bounds sin, and restrains men in their sins, as he does the raging sea, allowing it to go so far, but no further. He has such a power and command over wicked men, that they are not masters of their own affections and dispositions, but many times act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved and proposed: as in the case of Laban. He pursued Jacob, when he left Padan-aram, in order to return into his own country, with a wicked intention to do him hurt, by robbing him of his wives, children, and cattle; but the Lord restrained him, and influenced him to enter into a covenant of friendship with the good patriarch, (Genesis 32:1-32). Thus Esau had resolved on Jacob’s death, and went out to meet him with a purpose to destroy him; but when providence brought them together, it is said,” Esau embraced Jacob, and fell on his neck, and kiss him.” Thus Balaam came with an express intention to curse Israel, and yet he fell a blessing them. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favor the Israelites, so that they sent them away with great riches, by lending them jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and costly garments. Thus, by a secret instinct, he turned Jehoshaphat’s enemies away from him, when they came with a purpose to destroy him, (2 Chronicles 18:31); and at another time he turned his enemies against themselves, so that they sheathed their swords in one another’s bowels, (2 Chronicles 20:1-37). Thus also he restrained the soldiers that broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with Christ, from not touching his, in order to accomplish his word, that a bone of the paschal lamb, which was a type of Christ, the Lamb of God, should not be broken. So true is that saying of the Psalmist, (Psalms 76:10). “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” God has a bridle in the mouths of wicked men, when they are under the most impetuous fury of their lusts, to turn them as he will, restraining and curbing in respect of some, and giving swing to others.

Lastly, God overrules all to a good end. God has one end in wicked actions, and the sinner another. The sinner minds and intends evil, but God means and designs good by them all. So Joseph’s brothers, in their cruelty selling him for a slave, meant evil to the poor youth; but God, in that dispensation meant it for good, and brought much good out of it to Joseph, and his father and brethren. Thus the Jews crucified Christ out of malice against him; but God by that crucifixion intended satisfaction to his justice for the sins of men, and the redemption and salvation of an elect world. Thus God brings good, the greatest good out of the worst of evils. What greater evil or more atrocious wickedness can be imagined, than the violent death of the innocent Son of God, who went about doing good, and was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners? and yet what a rich and astonishing good resulted therefrom, even glory to God, and peace and goodwill towards men!

IV. Our next business is to consider the properties of divine providence.

God’s providence is most holy, (Psalms 145:7). “The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Even though providence reach to and be conversant in sinful actions, yet it is pure; as the sun contracts no defilement, though it shine on a dunghill. For God is neither the physical nor moral cause of the evil of any action, more than he who rides on a lame horse is the cause of

his halting. All the evil that is in sinful actions proceeds and flows from the wicked agent, as the stench of the dunghill does not proceed from the heat of the sun, but from the corrupt matter contained in the dunghill.

It is most wise, (Isaiah 28:29). “This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” Infinite wisdom always proposes the most excellent ends in all its operations, and uses the best methods for accomplishing its ends. However perplexed confused, and void of wisdom providential administrations may appear to us poor mortals of narrow, shallow capacities, yet they are the result of the highest wisdom and the deepest counsel, as proceeding from and directed by him whose name is the only wise God, and cannot but manage all things with the greatest understanding. And the day will at last come when it shall be said by the untied voice of the whole assembly and church of the first-born, that God hath done all things well: and then the plan of providence will appear in every respect to have been most wise, harmonious and consistent.

Providence is most powerful. Hence the Lord says to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria “I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest,” (2 Kings 19:28). “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” Who can resist his will which is almighty? He can never fail of his end, but all things fall out according to his decree, which is efficacious and irresistible.

I shall conclude with an use of exhortation.

Beware of drawing an excuse for your sin from the providence of God; for it is most holy, and has not the least efficiency in any sin you commit. Every sin is an act of rebellion against God; a breach of his holy law, and deserves his wrath and curse; and therefore cannot be authorized by an infinitely-holy God, who is of purer eyes that to behold iniquity without detestation and abhorrence. Though he has by a permissive decree allowed moral evil to be in the world, yet that has no influence on the sinner to commit it. For it is not the fulfilling of God’s decree, which is an absolute secret to every mortal, but he gratification of their own lusts and perverse inclinations, that men intend and mind in the commission of sin.

Beware of murmuring and fretting under any dispensations of providence that ye meet with; remembering that nothing falls out without a wise and holy providence, which knows best what is fit and proper for you. And in all cases, even amidst the most afflicting incidents that befall you, learn submission to the will of God; as Job did, when he said, in consequence of a train of the heaviest calamities that happened to him, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,” (Job 1:21). In the most distressing case say with the disciples, “The will of the Lord be done, (Acts 21:14).

Beware of anxious cares and diffidence about your through bearing in the world. This our Lord has cautioned his followers against, (Matthew 6:31). “Take no thought (that is, anxious and perplexing thought), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” Never let the fear of man stop you from duty, (Matthew 10:28-29); but let your souls learn to trust in God, who guides and superintends all the events and administrations of providence, by whatever hands they are performed. Do not slight means, seeing God worketh by them; and he that hath appointed the end orders the means necessary for gaining the end. Do not

rely upon means, for they can do nothing without God, (Matthew 4:4). Do not despond if there be no means, for God can work without them, as well as with them; (Hosea 1:7). “I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” If the means be unlikely, he can work above them, (Romans 4:19). “He considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.” If the means be contrary, he can work by contrary means, as he saved Jonah by the whale that devoured him. That fish swallowed up the prophet, but by the direction of providence, it vomited him out upon dry land.

Lastly, Happy is the people whose God the Lord is: for all things shall work together for their good. They may sit secure in exercising faith upon God, come what will. They have ground for prayer; for God is a prayer-hearing God, and will be inquired of by his people as to all their concerns in the world. And they have ground for the greatest encouragement and comfort amidst all the events of providence, seeing they are managed by their covenant God and gracious friend, who will never neglect or overlook his dear people, and whatever concerns them. For he hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” (Hebrews 13:5).

02.04. Of the Unity of God

“Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” Deuteronomy 4:4 We know that there is none other God but one.” 1 Corinthians 8:4 Compare: “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God.” Jeremiah 10:10

We have, in several preceding discourses, been endeavoring a little to explain the description of God that is given in our shorter Catechism, agreeable to the holy scriptures; and although it has been very imperfect, seeing it is but little of God we can know here; yet I hope what has been said upon it will tend to your instruction, and establishment in the faith, I now proceed to the next question, relating to the unity of God; which we have very clearly and strongly confirmed by the three passages of scripture which I have read. In the first of these texts there are two things which we are taught to believe concerning God. (1.) That he is JEHOVAH, a being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient. (2.) That he is the one [and] only God. Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought that in this text there is a plain intimation of the Trinity of Persons in the unity of the Godhead; for here the name of God is thrice mentioned, and yet all declared to be but one. Happy they who have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one master to please, and but one benefactor to seek to. In the second text the unity of God is also clearly asserted: There is none other God but one. The third text presents us with a very amiable representation of God. (1.) As the true God. He is, not a counterfeit and a mere pretender to divinity, as idols are; but he is really what he has revealed himself to be. He is one upon whom we may depend, and in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. (2.) As the living God. He is life itself, has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless; but ours is the living God and hath immortality. From the three passages of scripture compared together, the following doctrine natively arises, viz.

Doctrine: “There is but one only, the living and true God.” In discoursing this point, I shall shew, I. Why God is called the living God.

II. Why he is called the true God.

III. That there is but one God.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to show why God is called the living God.

1. He is called the living God, in opposition to, and to distinguish him from dead idols, (Psalms 115:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:9). These were but dead and lifeless things, stocks and stones, silver and gold, which the heathen nations did worship, neglecting the God that made the heavens and the earth. In this respect these idols were viler than the matter of which they were made, as the tree when in the ground had some life, but they had none.

2. Because God is the fountain of life, having all life in himself, (John 5:26), and giving life to all things else. All life is in him and from him. (1.) Natural life, (Acts 17:28). “For in him we live.” (1 Timothy 6:13). “Who quickeneth all things.” (2.) Spiritual life, (Ephesians 2:1). “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” (3.) Eternal life, (Colossians 3:4). “Christ is our life.” His giving of these to the creatures proves that they are in him, though in a more eminent way; for nothing can give what it has not.

II. I proceed to show why he is called the true God.

He is so called to distinguish him from all false or fictitious gods. Hence the apostle speaks of the Thessalonians having “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God,” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). And says the prophet, “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens,” (Jeremiah 10:11). The heathens, besides their worship of dead idols, worshipped also living creatures; “They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up,” (Deuteronomy 32:17). They were only gods in their blinded opinion and foolish fancy, not in reality; no more than the picture of a man, mistaken for a man, is a true man.

There is a twofold truth. (1.) Of fidelity or faithfulness. Thus God is true, that is, faithful, as was before explained. But that is not the truth here meant. (2.) A truth of essence, whereby a thing really is, and does not exist in opinion only. Thus the greatest liar is a true man; that is, he is really a man. It is in this sense that truth is attributed to God here. And the meaning is, that there is a true God, and but one true God. That there is a true God, or that truly and really there is a God, may be clearly demonstrated against atheists, by the light of nature, seeing they refuse scripture-testimony.

1. The works of creation and providence declare that there is a God. The heavens, earth, sea, air, and all that in them is, evidently proclaim their Maker to be divine. Look to the heaven, and behold how it is adorned with sun, moon, and stars. How wisely are these heavenly bodies situated with respect to us! Were they nearer, they would scorch and burn up the earth; were they placed at a greater distance, the earth would be bound with a perpetual frost and so be quite barren. How regularly do these heavenly bodies move, making night and day, summer and winter, in so orderly a manner, that these revolutions have never once ceased! If we consider the earth, we shall find it hang as a ball or a globe in the air, yet its foundation immoveable, though hung upon nothing. How is it adorned with trees, flowers, corns &c. and all these things necessary for the use of man and beast! And what an instance of divine wisdom is it, that all things are not found in every place, that so commerce betwixt man and man may be advanced and correspondence be established betwixt different and distant nations, in the reciprocal exchange of the commodities peculiar to each country! Are there not in these the brightest traces of order and symmetry, that point out a God as the former and preserver of them all? But let us look to man, that abridgement of the world, where the prints of a Divine Being appear in the brightest colors. The composition of his body, and the powers of his soul, may convince you of the existence of a Deity. For who but a God could unite such different substances, an immaterial spirit with an earthly body? Who could distinguish so many parts, assign to them their situation, form, and temperature, with an absolute fitness for those uses to which they serve? Well may we say with the apostle, “He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being,” (Acts 17:27-28). We may find him in the

activity of our hands, in the beauty of our eyes, and in the vivacity of our senses. And to look inward, who hath endued the soul with such distinct and admirable faculties; the understanding, which exercises an empire over all things, compounds the most disagreeing and divides the most intimate, by the lowest effects ascends to the highest cause; the will, which with such vigor pursues that which we esteem amiable and good, and recoils with aversion from that which we judge paining and evil; the memory, which preserves fresh and lively images of those things which are committed to its charge? Certainly then there is a God who made us. As these things have a being, it leads us to the being of a God: for these things cannot be eternal; for then their being would be a necessary being, and so not capable of alteration or destruction. If they had a beginning, they had it from another: then that must either have had it from itself, or another, and so on till we come to the first cause, which is God. For nothing can give itself a being, because so it should be and not be at one and the same time. And the order speaks out infinite wisdom that has so ruled and disposed all; or else it must be attributed to chance; which is far more absurd than to say that a most beautiful fabric was made by the fortuitous concourse of stones, timber, lime, &c. which is shocking to common sense.

2. Conscience tells men there is a God. It may be observed how it stirs up to duty, though the powers of the world would forbid it under the highest pains; it comforts a man after duty is performed, though he be persecuted for it. It condemns and stings a man for sin, even for secret sins unknown to any in the world, and that even where there is no hazard at all from that quarter. These are terrors that no art can pluck up, nor any force quell; and when men are going out of the world, are most lively and pungent, even when their judgment, is most clear, and free from the clouds and the prejudices of passions. How could these things be, if there were not a God, who by an omnipotent hand has planted conscience in their bosoms, as his own vicegerent, that stings them when none sees them? Atheists may, with as much hope of success, attempt to pull the sun, moon, and stars out of heaven, as to eradicate these innate impressions of a Supreme Divine Being.

3. The universal and perpetual consent of all nations in this matter, evinces that there is a God. That must needs be a natural truth, that in all ages, all nations, however different in all other things, have yet held that there is a God, so that they would rather worship anything than not have some God. Go back to ancient times; ask your fathers and they will tell you, your forefathers and your most ancient ancestors, and they will declare unto you, both that there is a God, and what he did in their days, and in the old times before them. Nay, inquire of the nations round about you, Spain and Turkey, the barbarous Tartars, the wild Africans, and the ignorant Americans, and they will all with one mouth confess this undeniable truth, That there is a God. This is an universal dictate of nature, spread as far and wide as reason and mankind are on the face of the earth. Some were called atheists among the heathens, not because they owned no God, but because they disowned their false gods. And if there have been any speculative atheists, that is, such who have been at all times thoroughly persuaded that there is no Supreme Divine Being, they have been still looked on as monsters of men, and prodigies in nature, which have been universally abhorred as pests of society, and enemies to mankind. But the truth is, whatever advances men may make towards atheism in their depraved judgments, yet it is absolutely impossible to get the notion of a Deity rooted quite out of the soul.

Let not the atheist (if such a creature can possibly exist in a human form) pretend, that this universal belief of a divine existence which has obtained in the world, is the product of a successful political device, contrived by its crafty governors to keep it in awe and subjection to themselves. For as this is nothing but a cunning insinuation to support the worst of causes, so it is absolutely unaccountable how this device should be so prevalent as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise such an uncontrollable empire over them. Is it possible that a few crafty men should so impose upon all the world, and they should never be, and, for anything can be seen, shall never be able to free themselves from the fraud?

Lastly, Will ye consider the multitude of miracles which have occurred in the world. If these wonders of nature which we call miracles be nothing else but a mere lie and forgery, how comes the world to be so generally imposed on? How comes not only the Jewish but the Christian religion to be confirmed and ratified in such a firm manner as they have been amongst men? But if it be true that nature's bonds are sometimes broken, that the ordinary methods of things and actions are crossed, and turned quite another way; if ever the sun stood still, or the angels were seen on an embassy from heaven; if ever God appeared in a flaming bush, and talked with man from the clouds; if ever sin was punished with a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven; in a word, if ever diseases were cured by a touch, and the dead raised to life by prayer: I say, if all these things be true, then answer me, Who is so able and so bold thus to transgress all the laws and hands of nature? Certainly it can be no other than God.

III. I come now to show that there is but one God.

There are gods many, and lords many, in title and the opinion of men; but there is only one true God, having no fellow or competitor. This great and important truth I shall endeavor to confirm, both from scripture and reason.

1. The scripture is very express and pointed on this head: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," (Deuteronomy 6:4). "I am the first, and the last, and besides me there is no God," (Isaiah 44:6). "There is one God, and there is none other but he," (Mark 12:32). Consult also the following passages, which clearly establish this article, viz. 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 18:31; Isaiah 46:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

2. This truth is clear from reason.

(1.) There can be but one First Cause, which hath its being of itself, and gave being to all other things, and on which all other beings depend, and that is God: for one such is sufficient for the production, preservation, and government of all things: and therefore more are superfluous, for there is no need of them at all. Certainly he that made the world can preserve, govern, and guide it, without the assistance of any other God; for if he needed any assistance, he were not God himself, an infinitely perfect and all-sufficient being. And whatever power, wisdom, or other requisite perfections can be imagined to be in many gods, for making, preserving, and governing the world, all these are in one infinitely perfect being. Therefore it is useless to feign many, seeing one is sufficient.

(2.) There can be but one infinite being, and therefore there is but one God. Two infinites imply a contradiction. Seeing God fills heaven and earth with his presence, and is infinite in all the perfections and excellencies of his nature, there can be no place for another infinite to subsist.

(3.) There can be but one Independent Being, and therefore but one God. [1.] There can be but one independent in being: for if there were more gods, either one of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and then that one would be the only God: or none of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and so none of them would be God; because none of them would be independent, or the fountain of being to all. [2.] There can be but one independent in working. For if there were more independent beings, then in those things wherein they will and act freely, they might will and act contrary things, and so oppose and hinder one another: so that being equal in power, nothing would be done by either of them. Yea, though we should suppose a plurality of gods agreeing in all things, yet seeing their mutual consent and agreement would be necessary to every action, it plainly appears, that each of them would necessarily depend on the rest in his operations; and so none of them would be God, because not absolutely independent.

(4.) There can be but one Omnipotent. For if there were two omnipotent beings, then the one is able to do whatsoever he will, and yet the other is able to resist and hinder him. And if the one cannot hinder the other, then that other is not omnipotent. Again, we must conceive two such beings, either as agreeing, and so the one would be superfluous; or as disagreeing, and so all would be brought to confusion, or nothing would be done at all; for that which the one would do, the other would oppose and hinder; just like a ship with two pilots of equal power, where the one would be ever cross to the other; when the one would sail, the other would cast anchor. Here would be a continual confusion, and the ship must needs perish. The order and harmony of the world, the constant and uniform government of all things, is a plain argument, that there is but one only Omnipotent being that rules all.

(5.) The supposition of a plurality of gods is destructive to all true religion. For if there were more than one God, we would be obliged to worship and serve more than one. But this is impossible for us to do; as will plainly appear, if ye consider what divine worship and service is. Religious worship and adoration must be performed with the whole man. This is what the divine eminence and excellency requires, that we love him with all our heart, soul and strength, and serve him with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies; and that our whole man, time, strength, and all we have, be entirely devoted to him alone. But this cannot be done to a plurality of gods. For in serving and worshipping a plurality, our hearts and strength, our time and talents, would be divided among them. To this purpose our Lord argues, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon,” (Matthew 5:24). Mammon is thought to be an idol, which the heathens reckoned to be the god of money and riches. Now, says Christ, you cannot serve them both; if you would have the Lord for your God, and serve him, you must renounce mammon. We cannot serve two gods or masters: if but one require our whole time and strength, we cannot serve the other.

(6.) If there might be more gods than one, nothing would hinder why there might not be one, or two, or three million of them. No argument can be brought for a plurality of gods, suppose two or three, but what a man might, by parity of reason, make use of for ever so many. Hence it is, that when men have once begun to fancy a plurality of gods, they have been endless in such fancies and imaginations. To this purpose is that charge against the Jews, who in this conformed themselves very much to the nations round about them, “According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah,” (Jeremiah 2:28). Varro reckons up three hundred gods whom the heathens

worshipped, and Hesiod reckons about three thousand of them. Indeed, if we once begin to fancy more gods than one, where shall we make an end? So that the opinion or conception of a plurality of gods is most ridiculous and irrational. And this should be observed against those who pretend, that the Father is the most high God, and that there is no most high God but one, yet that there is another true God, viz. Christ, who in very deed, as to them, is but a mere man; yet they pretend he is the true God. Christ is God, and the true and most high God. But, in opposition to them, consider that to be a man and to be a God are opposite, and cannot be said of one in respect of one nature, (Jeremiah 31:3; Acts 14:15; Jeremiah 10:11).

I shall now shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. Woe to atheists, then, whether they be such in heart or life; for their case is dreadful and desperate: and they shall sooner or later feel the heaviest strokes of the vengeance of that God whom they impiously deny, whether in opinion or by works. To dissuade from this fearful wickedness, consider,

(1.) That atheism is most irrational. It is great folly; and therefore the Psalmist saith, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” (Psalms 14:1). It is contrary to the stream of universal reason; contrary to the natural dictates of the atheist’s own soul; and contrary to the testimony of every creature. The atheist hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in heaven and earth. Besides, it is most unreasonable for any man to hazard himself on this bottom in the denial of a God. May he not reason thus with himself, what if there be a God, for anything that I know? then what a dreadful case will I be in when I find it so? If there be a God, and I fear and serve him, I gain a blessed and glorious eternity; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by believing that there is one. Now, ought not reasonable creatures to argue thus with themselves? What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him! He will meet with fearful reproaches on God’s part, and with dreadful terrors on his own: all that he gains is but a liberty to sin here, and a certainty to suffer for it hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

(2.) Atheism is most impious. What horrid impiety is it for men to deny their Creator a being, without whose goodness they could have had none themselves? Nay, every atheist is a Deicide, a killer of God as much as in him lies. He aims at the destruction of his very being. The atheist says upon the matter, that God is unworthy of a being, and that it were well if the world were rid of him.

(3.) Atheism is of pernicious consequence both to others and to the atheist himself. To others: for (1.) It would root out the foundation of government, and demolish all order among men. The being of God is the great guard of the world: for it is the sense of a Deity, upon which all civil order in cities and kingdoms is founded. Without this, there is no tie upon the consciences of men to restrain them from the most atrocious impieties and villainies. A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion. There could be no traffic nor commerce, if all the sacred bonds of it in the consciences of men were thus snapped asunder by denying the existence of God. (2.) It is introductive of all evil into the world. If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made, when the measure and standard of them is removed? for all good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, and upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God. So that if the foundation be destroyed, the whole superstructure must needs tumble down. A man might be a thief, a murderer,

and an adulterer, and yet in a strict sense not be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a god to himself. Where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, and the flood gates of all impiety rush in upon mankind. The whole earth would be filled with violence, and all flesh would corrupt their way.

Again, atheism is pernicious to the atheist himself, who denies the being of God, or endeavors to erase all notions of the Deity out of his mind. What can he gain by this but a sordid pleasure, unworthy of a reasonable nature? And suppose there were no God, what can he lose but his fleshly lusts, by believing there is one? By believing and confessing a God, a man ventures no loss; but by denying him, he runs the most desperate hazard if there be one. For this exposes him to the most dreadful wrath and vengeance of God. If there be a hotter receptacle in hell than another, it will be reserved for the atheist, who strikes and fights against God's very being.

(4.) Atheists are worse than heathens: for they worshipped many gods, but these worship none at all. They preserved some notion of God in the world, but these would banish him from both heaven and earth. They degraded him, but these would destroy him. Yea, they are worse than the very devils: for the devils are under the dread of this truth, That God is. It is said they "believe and tremble," (James 2:19). It is impossible for them to be atheists in opinion; for they feel there is a God by that sense of his wrath that torments them. There may be atheists in the church, but there are none in hell. Thus atheism is a most dreadful evil, most carefully to be guarded against.

Inf. 2. Seeing there is one only the living and true God, we owe the most perfect and unlimited obedience to his will. We are to obey the will of his command with readiness and alacrity; and submit to the will of his providence with the utmost cheerfulness, without fretting or murmuring.

Inf. 3. Is God one? then his children should live in unity, that they may be one as he is one. They should study to be one in judgment and opinion, one in affection, and one in practice. We should all live as the family of one God, carefully avoiding divisions, and whatever may tend to interrupt the communion of saints.

Inf. 4. Seeing God is one, he should be the centre of our affections, love, fear, delight, joy, &c. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

I shall conclude all with a few directions.

1. Beware of such opinions as tend to atheism, and aim at the undermining of this supreme truth, that God is. There are many opinions which have a woeful tendency this way. Such is that of denying the immortality of the soul. This is a stroke at a distance at the very being of God, who is the Supreme Spirit. There is an order among spirits; first, the souls of men, then angels, and then God. Now, these degrees of spirits are, as it were, a rail and fence about the sense we have of the being and majesty of God. And such as deny the immortality of the soul, strike at a distance at the eternity and existence of the Deity.

Another opinion is, that men of all religions shall be saved; so that it is no matter what religion a man be of, if he walk according to the principles of it, and be of a sober moral life. In these latter times some are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity betray their faith, and plead for the salvation of heathens, Turks, and infidels. But ye should remember, that, as

there is but one God, and one heavenly Jerusalem, so there is but one faith, and one way by which men can come to the enjoyment of God there. Such libertine principles have a manifest tendency to make people loose of all religion. To make many doors to heaven, as one says, is to widen the gates of hell.

Another opinion tending to atheism is, the denying of God's providence in the government of the world. Some make him an idle spectator of what is done here below, asserting that he is contented with his own blessedness and glory, and that whatever is without him is neither in his thoughts nor care. Many think that this world is but as a great clock or machine, which was set agoing at first by God, and afterwards left to its own motion. But if ye exempt anything from the dominion of providence, then you will soon run into all manner of libertinism. If Satan and wicked men may do what they will, and God be only a looker-on, and not concerned with human affairs, then ye may worship the devil, lest he hurt you, and fear men though God be propitious to you.

2. Beware of indulging sin. When ye take a liberty to sin, and gratify your vile and sordid lusts, you will hate the law that forbids it; and this will lead you to a hatred of the Lawgiver; and hatred of God strikes against his very being. When once you allow yourselves an indulgence to sin, you will be apt to think, O that there were no God to punish me for my crimes! and would gladly persuade yourselves that there is none; and will think it your only game to do what ye can to root out the notions of God in your own minds, for your own quiet, that so ye may wallow in sin without remorse.

3. Prize and study the holy scriptures, for they show clearly that there is a God. There are more clear marks and characters of a Deity stamped upon the holy scriptures than upon all the works of nature. Therefore converse much with them. By this means was Junius converted from atheism. His father perceiving him to be so atheistical, caused lay a Bible in every room, so that in whatsoever room he entered, a Bible haunted him; and he fancied it upbraided him thus: "Wilt thou not read me, atheist? wilt thou not read me?" Whereupon he read it, and was thereby converted. I say then, study the holy scriptures, and in doing so, learn to submit your reason to divine revelation. For some men, neglecting the scriptures, and going forth in the pride of their own understandings, have at last disputed themselves into flat atheism.

4. Study God in the creatures as well as in the scriptures. The creatures were all made to be heralds of the divine glory, and his glorious being and perfections appear evidently in them. Hence saith the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God? and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world: in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun," (Psalms 19:1-4). The world is sometimes compared to a book, and sometimes to a preacher. The universe is like a great printed book, wherein God sets forth himself to our view; and the great diversity of creatures which are in it, are so many letters, out of which we may spell his name. And they all preach loudly unto us the glorious being and excellencies of God. And therefore the apostle tells us, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse," (Romans 1:20). In the book of the creatures God hath written a part of the excellency of his name; and you should learn to read God wherever he hath made himself legible to you.

5. Lastly, Ye who are yet sinners, lying in your natural state of sin and misery, come unto God in Christ, and receive him as your God by faith, and so ye will be preserved from atheism. And ye who are believers in Christ, be often viewing God in your own experiences of him. Have you not often found God in the strengthening, reviving, and refreshing influences of his grace upon your souls? Have ye not had sweet manifestations of his love? Have you not had frequent refreshing tastes of his goodness, in pardoning your iniquities, hearing and answering your prayers, supplying your wants, and feasting your souls? The reviewing of such experiences will be a mighty preservative against atheism. Can you doubt of his being, when you have been so often revived, refreshed, and supported by him? The secret touches of God upon your hearts, and your inward converses with him, are to you a clearer evidence of the being of God, than all the works of nature.

02.05. Of the Work of Creation

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Hebrews 11:3

Having discoursed to you of the decrees of God, whereby he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, I come now to treat of the execution of these decrees. That question, “How doth God execute his decrees?” being only an introduction to what follows, it is needless to insist on it. Only you must know, that for God to execute his decrees, is to bring to pass what he has decreed. Now, what God from all eternity decreed is brought to pass in the works of creation and providence. Nothing falls out in either of these but what was decreed; nor does it fall out in any other way than as it was decreed. The decrees of God are as it were the scheme, draught and pattern of the house; and the works of creation and providence are the house, built in every point conformable to the draught. In the text we have an answer to that question, “What is the work of creation?” Wherein, we may consider,

1. What we understand about it. (1.) The making of the world; it was framed, and had a beginning, not being from eternity. (2.) The author and efficient cause of it, God. (3.) What God made, the worlds; all things, heaven, earth, sea, air, &c. and all the inhabitants thereof, angels, men, cattle, fowls, fishes, &c. (4.) How they were made, by the word of God, that word of power which spake all things, into being. Or it may denote Jesus Christ, who is called the word of God, and by whom God made the worlds. (5.) Whereof they were made. This is declared negatively, Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear, that is, not of pre-existent matter, but of nothing. By things that are seen may be understood visible corporeal things; and if these were made of nothing, much more things that are not seen. But I rather understand it of all things which are seen to have a being; for that word relates to the eyes of the understanding, as well as of the body.

2. How we understand this creation of the world, through faith. Not that we can understand nothing of the creation by the light of nature; for the eternity of the world is contrary to reason as well as faith; but we have the full and certain knowledge of this work of creation in the particular circumstances of it, through faith assenting to divine revelation, and no other way. In speaking to this work of creation I shall show, I. What we are to understand by creation.

II. That the world was made, or had a beginning.

III. Who made it.

IV. What God made.

V. Whereof all things were made.

VI. How they were made.

VII. In what space of time they were made.

VIII. For what end God made all things.

IX. In what case or condition he made them.

X. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I am to show what we are to understand by creation, or what it is to create.

1. It is not to be taken here in a large sense, as sometimes it is used in scripture, for any production of things wherein second causes have their instrumentality; as when it is said, “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth,” (Psalms 104:30). Where the meaning is, thou sendest forth thy quickening power, which produceth life in the creatures from time to time: for the Psalmist speaks not here of the first creation, but of the continued and repeated production of living creatures, in which the divine power is the principal agent. But,

2. We are to take it strictly, for the production of things out of nothing, or the giving a being to things which had none before. And here you must know, that there is a twofold creation, one immediate, and the other mediate.

(1.) There is an immediate creation; as when things are brought forth out of pure nothing, where there was no pre-existent matter to work upon. Thus the heavens, the earth, the waters, and all the materials of inferior bodies, were made of nothing; and the souls of men are still produced from the womb of nothing by God’s creative power, and infused into their bodies immediately by him, when they are fully organized to receive them.

(2.) There is a secondary and mediate creation, which is the making things of pre-existing matter, but of such as is naturally unfit and altogether indisposed for such productions, and which could never by any power of second causes be brought into such a form. Thus all beasts, cattle, and creeping things, and the body of man, were at first made of the earth, and the dust of the ground; and the body of the first woman was made of a rib taken out of the man. Now, this was a creation as well as the former; because, though there was matter here to work upon, yet it could never have been reduced into such a form without the efficacy of Almighty power. We have an account of both these in the history of the creation. It is said, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;” (Genesis 1:1) i.e., he made that mighty mass of matter out of nothing, which was at first a rude and indigested lump; for the earth was without form, and the heavens without light. And then by that same omnipotent power he reduced it into that beautiful order and disposition wherein it now appears to our view.

II. I go on to show that the world was made, that it had a beginning and was not eternal. This the scripture plainly testifies, (Genesis 1:1, above quoted). And this reason itself teacheth: for whatsoever is eternal, the being of it is necessary, and it is subject to no alteration. But we see this is not the case with the world; for it is daily undergoing alterations.

III. I am next to show who made the world, and gave it a beginning. That was God and he only, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” (Genesis 1:1) This will evidently appear from the following particulars.

1. The world could not make itself; for this would imply a horrid contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause, must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing hath no existence, so it

hath no operation. There must therefore be something of real existence, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if anything made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a creature.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused rout of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in the bigness, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.1

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the peculiar glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, “I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself,” (Isaiah 44:24). “I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded,” (Isaiah 45:12) “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?” (Isaiah 40:12-13). “Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea,” (Job 9:8). These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed everything of the kind that hath been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity.—By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shows himself to be the true God. “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion,” (Jeremiah 10:11-12). “All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens,” (Psalms 96:5). “Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth,” (Isaiah 37:19). None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united. This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in scripture as the Creator, —”The Father, of whom are all things,” (1 Corinthians 8:6). The same prerogative belongs to the Son, “All things were made by him (the Word, the Son); and without him was not any thing made that was made,” (John 1:3) The same honour belongs to the Holy Ghost, as “By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens,” (Job 26:13). “The Spirit of God hath made me (says Elihu), and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life,” (Job 33:4). All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator;

and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit are excluded; but because, as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be conceived thus: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority: “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” —In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For “the Father created all things by Jesus Christ,” (Ephesians 3:9). And we are told, that “all things were made by him,” (John 3:3). This work in regard of disposition and ornament, doth peculiarly belong to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” (Genesis 1:2), to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. Thus it is also said, “By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens,” (Job 26:13).

IV. Our next province is to show what God made. All things whatsoever, besides God, were created, “Thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created,” (Revelation 4:11). “By him were all things created,” (Colossians 1:16). The evil of sin is no positive being, it being but a defect or want, and therefore is not reckoned among the things which God made, but owes its existence to the will of fallen angels and men. Devils being angels, are God’s creatures; but God did not make them evil, or devils, but they made themselves so.

Those things that were made in the beginning were most properly created of God; but whatsoever is or will be produced in the world, is still made by God, not only in respect that the matter whereof they are made was created by him, but because he is the first cause of all things, without whom second causes could produce nothing; and whatever power one creature has of producing another, is from God. Hence Elihu says, as above cited, “The Spirit of God hath made me;” though he was produced by the operation of second causes. And it is worth while to consider what David says on this head, (Psalms 139:13-16). This clearly appears from the impotency of the creature to produce anything according to nature, when God denies his concurrence. Hence we have a chain of causes described, where God is the first cause, and acts the same part in all other operations wherein creatures are concerned: “I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel,” (Hosea 2:21-22). If it be asked, then, what did God make? I answer, he made everything that has a being, this stately structure of the universe, and that vast variety of creatures that are in it, sin only excepted, which he permitted should take place, but had no hand in the effecting of it as such.

V. I proceed to show of what all things were made. Of nothing; which does not denote any matter of which they were formed, but the term from which God brought them; when they had no being he gave them one. There was no pre-existent matter to make them of, nothing at all to work upon: for he “made all things both visible and invisible,” (Colossians 1:16; Romans 11:36). If then he made all things, he must needs have made them of nothing, unless he would say there was, besides God, something before there was anything, which is a palpable contradiction. To create is properly to make a thing of nothing, to make a thing have an existence that had none before. Thus were the heavens and the earth made of nothing simply; that is, they began to exist, which they never did

before. This is what is called immediate creation, as I showed on the first head. But there is a mediate creation, as I also noticed, which is a producing of things from matter altogether unfit for the work, and which could never be disposed, but by an almighty power to be such a thing. Thus man's body was created of the dust, and this itself was created of nothing, and was utterly unfit for producing such a work without a superior agency.

VI. The sixth head is to show, how all things were made of nothing. By the word of God's power. It was the infinite power of God that gave them a being; which power was exerted in his word, not a word properly spoken, but an act of his will commanding them to be, God said, "Let there be light and there was light," (Genesis 1:3). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast," (Psalms 33:6, Psalms 33:9). By his powerful word he called them from nothing to being. "God calleth those things which be not as though they were," (Romans 4:17) This is a notable evidence of infinite power, which with so great easiness as the speaking of a word, could raise up this glorious fabric of the world. An heathen philosopher considered this as a striking instance of the sublime, peculiar to the books of the Jewish legislator.

VII. Our next business is to show in what space of time the world was created. It was not done in a moment, but in the space of six days, as is clear from the narrative of Moses. It was as easy for God to have done it in one moment as in six days. But this method he took, that we might have that wisdom, goodness, and power that appeared in the work, distinctly before our eyes, and be stirred up to a particular and distinct consideration of these works, for commemoration of which a seventh day is appointed a sabbath of rest. But although God did not make all things in one moment, yet we are to believe, that every particular work was done in a moment, seeing it was done by a word, or an act of the divine will, (Psalms 33:9, forecited). No sooner was the divine will intimated, than the thing willed instantly took place. In the space of these six days the angels were created; and it is not to be thought that they were brought into being before that period; for the scripture expressly asserts, that all things were created in that space, (Exodus 20:11). And though Moses, makes no express mention of the angels, (Genesis 1:1-31) yet, he shows that they were created in one of these six days, as he mentions the host of the heavens and the earth, (Genesis 2:1); and it is certain, that in the host of heaven the angels are included, where Micaiah the prophet says, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (which can be no other than the angels) standing by him," (1 Kings 22:19). The works of the first day were, (1.) The highest heaven, the seat of the blessed, and that with the angels its inhabitants, who under the designation of "morning stars and sons of God," are said to have "sang together, and shouted for joy," (Job 38:4-7) when the foundations of the earth were laid, as being then made. (2.) The earth, that is, the mass of earth and water, which Moses says was without form and void; that is, without that beauty and order which it afterwards received, and destitute of inhabitants, and without furniture and use. (3.) The light, which was afterwards gathered together, and distributed into the body of the sun and stars. The works of the second day were the firmament; that is, that expansion or vast space which extends itself from the surface of the earth to the utmost extremity of the visible heavens, which in verse 8, is called heaven, that is, the aerial heavens, the habitation of birds and fowls, through which they wing their way. This vast extension is called the firmament, because it is fixed in its proper place, without which it cannot be removed without force and violence. Another work of this day was the dividing of the waters above the firmament, that is, the clouds, from the waters as yet mixed with the earth, which were afterwards gathered together into

seas, rivers, lakes, fountains, &c. On the third day, the lower waters were gathered into certain hollow places, which formed the sea; and the dry land appeared, adorned with plants, trees, and herbs, which continue to be produced to this day. On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were made, to enlighten the world, and render it a beautiful place, which otherwise would have been an uncomfortable dungeon, and to distinguish the four seasons of the year. On the fifth day, the fishes and fowls were made. On the sixth day, all sorts of beasts, tame and wild, and creeping things were produced out of the earth; and last of all, man, male and female.

It is probable that the world was created in autumn, that season of the year in which generally things are brought to perfection for the use of man and beast. But this not being an article of faith, we need not insist upon it.

VIII. I come now to show for what end God made all things. It was for his own glory, “The Lord hath made all things for himself,” (Proverbs 16:4); “For of him, and through him, and to him are all things,” (Romans 11:36). And there are these three attributes of God that especially shine forth in this work of creation, namely, his wisdom, power, and goodness.

1. His wisdom eminently appears, (1.) In that after the heavens and their inhabitants were created, those things that have only being and not life, then those that have being and life, but not sense, then those that have being, life, and sense, but not reason, and last of all, man, having being, life, sense, and reason, were successively formed. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.” (2.) In his appointing of everything to its proper use, by the law of creation, (Genesis 1:1-31). Hence the wisdom of God is celebrated in that work; “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion,” (Jeremiah 10:12).

2. The power of God appeared, (1.) In creating all things by a word, which instantly produced the effect intended. (2.) In that he created plants, herbs, and trees, before the sun, moon, and stars, which now naturally are the causes of the earth’s producing its fruits; as also light before them, for discovering their beauty and verdure.

3. His goodness appears, in that he first prepared the place before he brought in the inhabitants, first provided the food before the living creatures were made, and adorned and fitted all for the use of man, before he formed him.

IX. If it is asked, “In what state were all things made?” I answer, They were all “very good,” (Genesis 1:31). The goodness of the creature consists in its fitness for the use for which it was made. In this respect everything answered exactly the end of its creation. Again, the goodness of things is their perfection; and so everything was made agreeable to the idea thereof that was formed in the divine mind. There was not the least blemish or defect in the work; but everything was beautiful, as it was the effect of infinite wisdom as well as almighty power. And God being the end of all, even natural things tend to him. (1.) Declaring his glory in an objective way, (Psalms 19:1). (2.) Stirring us up to seek him, and behold him as our chief good and portion, (Acts 17:26-27; Romans 1:20). (3.) Sustaining our life, and serving man, that he might serve God, for which he was made very fit, in regard of the rich endowments of his mind, all pure, holy, and upright, (1 Corinthians 10:31). All the sin and misery that is now in the world, by which its beauty is greatly marred, its goodness defaced, and disorder and irregularity so universally prevail,

proceeded from Satan, and man's yielding to his temptations.

I shall shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. God is a most glorious being, infinitely lovely and desirable, possessed of every perfection and excellency. He made all things, and bestowed upon them all the perfections and amiable qualities with which they are invested. So that there is no perfection in any of the creatures which is not in him in an eminent way, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Psalms 94:9). Whatever excellency and beauty is in the creatures, is all from him; and sure it must be most excellent in the fountain.

2. God's glory should be our chief end. And seeing whatever we have is from him, it should be used and employed for him: For "all things were created by him and for him," (Colossians 1:16). Have we a tongue? It should be employed for him, to show forth his praise; hands? they should do and work for him; life? it should be employed in his service; talents and abilities? they should be laid out for promoting his interest and honor; and, upon a proper call, we should be ready to suffer for him.

3. God is our Sovereign Lord Proprietor, and may do in us, on us, and by us, what he will: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:20-21). There is no reason to murmur and fret under the cross, or any afflicting dispensations, that he exercises us with. Should he destroy that being that he gave us, to whom would he do wrong? As he gave it us freely, he may take it away, without any impeachment of his goodness and justice. May not God do with his own what he will?

4. We should use all the creatures we make use of with an eye to God, and due thankfulness to him, the giver; employing them for our use, and in our service, soberly and wisely, with hearts full of gratitude to our Divine Benefactor; considering they stand related to God as their Creator, and are the workmanship of his own hands. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving," (1 Timothy 4:4). They are not to be used to his dishonor, or the feeding of our base lusts and irregular appetites, but to fit us for and strengthen us in the performance of our duty to him.

5. There is no case so desperate, but faith may get sure footing with respect to it in the power and word of God. Let the people of God be ever so low, they can never be lower than when they were not at all. Hence the Lord says, "Be glad and rejoice," (Isaiah 65:18) &c. He spoke a word and so the creature was made at first; and it will cost him but a word to make it over again. Hence Christ is called "the beginning of the creation of God," (Revelation 3:14). O seek to be new-made by him; that old things may pass away, and all things become new.

6. Give away yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, making an hearty, a cheerful, and an entire dedication and surrender of your souls and bodies, and all that ye are and have, to him as your God and Father, resolving to serve and obey him all the days of your life: that as he made you for his glory, you may in some measure answer the end of your creation, which is to show forth his praise. Serve not sin or Satan any longer. God made you upright and holy; but Satan unmade you, stripping you of your highest glory and ornament. Relinquish his service, which is the basest drudgery and slavery, and will land all that are employed in it in hell at last: and engage in the

service of God in Christ, which is truly honorable and glorious, and will be crowned with an everlasting reward in the other world: for where he is, there shall his servants also be.

7. Lastly, This doctrine affords a ground of love, peace, justice and mercy betwixt men, which should be carefully cultivated by all that would desire to be with God for ever. For says the prophet, “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?” (Malachi 2:10). The consideration of being created by God, should be a powerful inducement to us to practice all the duties we owe to one another as men and Christians.

Footnote:

1 The theory of Atoms, and of the creation of the heavens and the earth, merely by their accidental collision, is no new theory of an “advanced,” “enlightened,” “modern,” or “scientific” age. This theory was, in fact, as hinted by our author, long ago held by Democritus (born c. 460 BC) and after him by Epicurus and his followers. Even before the advent of the Messiah, amongst those not favored with the light of the Gospel, there were many who, guided by the light of nature and solid reason, had recognized how very foolish, unscientific, and ungodly this theory is, accounting it as “nonsense,” a vanity of an unenlightened age and a mere scheme to remove all notions of any real divine influence on this world (thus allowing for human free-will.) The reader will find such mocking condemnations of this theory scattered throughout Cicero’s The Nature of the Gods (c. 44 BC.) The regularity of motion of the heavenly bodies: the variety, beauty and order of the sun and moon and all the stars,—Why, the very aspect of the heavens declared that they were not the work of chance. If one comes into an house, or a gymnasium, or a public place, and sees everything properly arranged and carried on in order, one does not imagine these arrangements to be accidental, but infers that there is someone in command whose orders are obeyed. How much more then when we are confronted with movements so vast and changes so profound, with the government of bodies so immense and so innumerable, which has never deviated... must we not admit that such mighty natural movements are guided and controlled by some divine intelligence? (p. 129.) Is it not a wonder that anyone can bring himself to believe that a number of solid and separate particles by their chance collisions and moved only by the force of their own weight could bring into being so marvelous and beautiful a world? If anybody thinks that this is possible, I do not see why he should not think that if an infinite number of examples of the twenty-one letters of the alphabet, made of gold or what you will, were shaken together and poured out on the ground it would be possible for them to fall so as to spell out, say, the whole text of the Annals of Ennius. In fact I doubt whether chance would permit them to spell out a single verse! (p. 161.)

Chapter 36

03.00. Of Sin

Of Sin By Thomas Boston 1. Of Sin in General 2. Of Our Fall in Adam 3. Of the First Sin in Particular

03.01. Of Sin in General

OF SIN IN GENERAL “Sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4 In these words we have an answer to that question, “What is sin?” It is a transgression of the law: for “where no law is, there is no transgression,” (Romans 4:16). But because the word transgression seems to import something positive and actual, therefore it is added in the Catechism, it is a “want of conformity unto the law,” which is a more general definition: and this meaning the word in the original most properly bears. Hence both a want of conformity unto the law of God, and a transgression of it, are taken into the description; and in effect they are both one thing. In the further illustration of this subject, it will be proper to show, I. What that law is whereof sin is the transgression.

II. Wherein the nature of sin consists.

III. Wherein the evil thereof lies.

IV. Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to show what is that law whereof sin is the transgression. It is the law of God, even any law of his whereby he lays any duty upon any of the children of men, whether it be the natural law which is written even in the hearts of all men, (Romans 2:15) or the revealed law and will of God, written in the Bible, whether it be the law strictly so called, or the gospel, whose great command is to believe in Christ; the transgression of which command is the great sin of the hearers of the gospel. In a word, the law of which sin is the transgression, is any law or command of God which he obliges us to obey. More particularly,

1. There is a law engraven upon the hearts of men by nature, which was in force long before the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. This is the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience concerning those moral principles of good and evil, which have an essential equity in them, and show man his duty to God, to his neighbor, and to himself. There is a law in all men by nature, which is a rule of good and evil. They have notions of right and wrong in their consciences; which is evident by those laws which are common in all nations for the preservation of human society, the encouraging of virtue, and discouraging of vice. These laws are to be found among men who have not the benefit of divine revelation for regulating their lives. Now, what standard else can they have for these but common reason, and the light of nature? Every son and daughter of Adam brings with them into the world a law in their breast; and when reason clears up itself from the clouds of sense, they can distinguish between good and evil, between things which ought to be done, and things which they should avoid. Every man finds a law in his heart that checks and rebukes when he offends, and cherishes and encourages him when be does good. None are without a legal indictment and a legal execution within themselves, (Romans 2:14-15).

2. There is another law which was given to the Jewish nation by the ministry of Moses. This is spoken of by Christ; “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?” (John 17:19). By this we are to understand the whole system of divine precepts concerning ceremonial rites, judicial processes, and moral duties. Accordingly there was a threefold law given by Moses.

(1.) The ceremonial law, which was a certain system of divine positive precepts, with relation to the external worship of God. It was wholly taken up in enjoining those observances of sacrifices and offerings, and various methods of purifications and cleansings which were typical of Christ, and of that sacrifice of his which alone was able to take away sin.

(2.) The judicial law consisted of those institutions which God prescribed the Jews for their civil government. For, whereas, in other commonwealths, the chief magistrates give laws unto the people; in this the laws for their religion and for their civil government were both divine, and both immediately from God. So that the judicial law was given them to be the standing law of their nation, according to which all actions and suits between party and party were to be tried and determined; as in all other nations there are particular laws and statutes for the decision of controversies that may arise among men.

3. There is the moral law which is a system or body of those precepts which carry an universal and natural equity in them, being so conformable to the light of reason, and the dictates of every man's conscience, that as soon as ever they are declared and understood, we must needs subscribe to the justice and righteousness of them. We have the sum of this law in the ten commandments. This law continues in its full force and power, obliging the conscience as a standing rule for our obedience. Our Lord tells us that, "he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them," (Matthew 5:17). The ceremonial law was abolished by the death of Christ, and the judicial law, so far as it concerned the nation of the Jews as a commonwealth and body politic, particularly touching their not marrying out of their own tribes, their not alienating the inheritance of their fathers, the raising up of seed to their deceased brother, &c., but such of these political laws as are common to men in general, and founded upon the law of nature, are still binding and in force, such as the laws for punishing criminals and other offenders, the laws against oppressing of widows, orphans, strangers, the fatherless, &c. These are a standing rule of equity and justice; they are of a moral nature, and therefore of perpetual obligation. So that the law of which sin is the transgression, is to us the law of nature in our hearts, and the moral law contained in the scriptures, and summed up in the Decalogue, as well as the positive laws of the gospel of Christ.

II. I proceed to show wherein the nature of sin consists. It consists in a want of conformity to the law of God, or a disconformity thereto. The law of God is the rule; whatsoever is over this rule, is sin. The law of God is set as a mark to us; and so the word sin, in the first language properly signifies a not hitting the mark; and transgression is a swerving from the right line, or a going off the way. So it is called "a going aside," (Psalms 14:3). Now, nothing is conformable to the law which is not perfectly so; for if it be in the least disagreeable thereto, it is not conformable to it, more than that which wants half an inch of an ell [approx. 45 inches; Ed.] is truly an ell of measure; and therefore any want of that conformity is sin. The law of God requires universal conformity to it. Now the law or command of God requires a twofold conformity.

1. A conformity of the heart to it. It reaches the inward man, seeing God is a spirit, and that omniscient One who knows the heart; and the whole heart must be subject to him. Therefore our Saviour says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," (Mark 12:30).

2. A conformity of the life both in words and deeds. Hence says David, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;

who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," (Psalms 24:3-4). And forasmuch as the law requires some things, and forbids other things both in heart and life, the want of conformity to it in these respects, either in heart or life, is sin. Hence we may infer,

1. Sin is no positive being, but a want of due perfection, a defect, an imperfection in the creature; and therefore it is, (1.) Not from God, but from the creature itself. (2.) It is not a thing to glory in, more than the want of all things. (3.) It is a thing we have reason to be humbled for, and have great need to have removed. (4.) It is not a thing to be desired, but fled from and abhorred, as the abominable thing which God hateth.

2. Original sin is truly and properly sin. Look to yourselves as you came into the world, and ye must smite on your breast, before ye have sucked the breasts, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." For we come into it with Adam's sin imputed, (Romans 5:12) striped of original righteousness, and the whole nature corrupted. This is the sin of our nature, being a want of conformity in our souls to the law of God, which requires all moral perfection of us; "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," (Matthew 5:1-48: ult). Instead of which we have a bent of soul quite contrary to the law; "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," (Romans 8:7).

3. The first motions of sin, and the risings of that natural corruption in us, before it be completed with the consent of the will to the evil motion, are truly and properly sin. The apostle calls this lust, and distinguishes it from sin, i.e. the sin of our nature, and from the consent to it and execution of it, which he calls "obeying these lusts," (Romans 6:12) and tells us that it is condemned by the law, (Romans 7:7). Therefore a thing may be our sin, though we know it not to be so, (1 Timothy 1:13). And though it be not our will, yea though against our will, (Romans 7:16). For it is neither our knowledge, or opinion, nor our will, but the law of God, that is the rule.

4. All consent of the heart to and delight in motions towards things forbidden by the law of God are sins, though these never break forth into action, but die where they were born in the inmost corners of our hearts; "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," (Matthew 5:28). Speculative filthiness is a disconformity to the law. There is heart murder as well as actual murder, (Matthew 5:22).

5. All omissions of the internal duties we owe to God and our neighbors are sins, as want of love to God or our neighbors. Want of due fear of God, trust and hope in him, &c. are internal sins of omission.

6. Hence a man sins by undue silence and undue speaking, when the cause of God and truth require it; seeing the law bids us speak in some cases, but never speak what is not good.

7. Hence also a man's sins, when he omits outward duties that are incumbent on him to perform, as well as when he commits sin of whatever kind in his life.

8. Lastly, The least failure in any duty is sin; and whatever comes not up in perfection to the law is sinful. And therefore we sin in everything we do, and our best duties deserve damnation, and cannot be accepted according to the law. Wherefore the duties of wicked men are absolutely rejected, seeing they are under the law; and the duties of the godly are no otherwise accepted, but as washed in the blood of Christ, which takes away the sin cleaving to them.

Further, nothing can be a sin but what is a transgressing of the law of God, who only is Lord over the conscience. Therefore, if there be no law of God in the case, there is no transgression affecting the conscience. But it must be considered, that the law of God commands some things expressly, and others things by good consequence. No law of God commands a servant expressly to do such and such a particular piece of work that is lawful, which he is bidden do by his master; but the law of God says, “Servants, obey your masters;” and therefore it is sin if he do not that work. The case is the same as to men’s laws. Therefore the apostle says, “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” (Romans 13:5). Now, men’s laws are either contrary to God’s laws, or agreeable and subservient thereto, as being for the glory of God, or the good of the nation in general. As to the first of these, ye cannot obey without sin, as if the queen and Parliament should command you to receive human ceremonies in the worship of God. As to other things that are good and just, we are obliged to obey, as is clear from Romans 13:1-14; and therefore the conscience is not altogether unconcerned in the laws of men. And therefore, if ye would be tender Christians, before ye go against the laws of the land, consider well whether their commands be unlawful, or whether they be such as are good and just; for doubtless magistrates have a power to make laws for the good of the land in general; and what they so make we are obliged to respect, otherwise we contemn the ordinance of God, and regard not the good of our neighbor, and thereby sin against God; as is acknowledged in the case of those that now export grain, to the general distress of the country. And I apprehend, that if we would lay the case home to ourselves, we would have less liberty than we have in some things that are not scrupled at.

III. I come now to show wherein the evil of sin lies. It lies, 1. And principally, in the wrong done to God, and its contrariety, (1.) To his nature, which is altogether holy. hence the Psalmist says, “Against thee, thee only have, sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,” (Psalms 51:4). David had exceedingly wronged Uriah in defiling his wife, and procuring the death of himself; yet he considers his great sin in that matter as chiefly against God, and contrary to his holy nature. (2.) In its contrariety to God’s will and law, which is a sort of a copy of his nature. And God being all good, and the chief good, sin must needs be a sort of infinite evil.

2. In the wrong it doth to ourselves “He that sinneth against me,” says the personal Wisdom of God, “wrongeth his own soul,” (Proverbs 8:36). For, (1.) It leaves a stain and spiritual pollution on the soul, whereby it becomes filthy and vile; and therefore sin is called filthiness, and is said to defile the soul, whereupon follows God’s loathing the sinner, (Isaiah 1:15) and shame and confusion on the sinner himself, (Genesis 3:7). (2.) It brings on guilt, whereby the sinner is bound over to punishment, according to the state in which he is, until his sin be pardoned. This ariseth from the justice of God and the threatening of his law; which brings on all miseries whatsoever. But more particularly upon this head, when men pass the bounds and limits which God hath set them in his law, then they transgress it. All the violations of negative precepts are transgressions of God’s law. The design of the moral law is to keep men. within the bounds of their duty; and when they sin they go beyond them. Sin is indeed the greatest of evils; it is directly opposite to God the supreme good. The definition that is given of sin expresses its essential evil. It is the transgression of the divine law, and consequently it opposes the rights of God’s throne, and obscures the glory of his attributes, which are exercised in the moral government of the world. God is our king, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. From his right and propriety in us as his creatures, his title to and

sovereign power and dominion over us doth arise and flow. Man is endued with the powers of understanding and election, to conceive and choose what is good, and to reject what is evil; is governed by a law, even the declared will of his Maker. Now, sin, being a transgression of this law, contains many evils in it. As,

1. It is high rebellion against the sovereign Majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law. Therefore divine precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding motive to obedience. I am the Lord. He that commits sin, especially with pleasure and design, implicitly denies his dependence upon God as his Maker and Governor, and arrogates to himself an irresponsible liberty to do his own will. This is clearly expressed by those atheistical designers, who said, “Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us? (Psalms 12:4). The language of men’s actions, which is more convincing than their words, plainly declares, that they despise his commandments, and contemn his authority, as if they were not his creatures and subjects.

2. It is an extreme aggravation of this evil, that sin, as it is a disclaiming our homage to God, so it is in true account a yielding subjection to the devil; for sin is in the strictest propriety his work. The original rebellion in paradise was by his temptation, and all the actual and habitual sins of men, since the fall, are by his efficacious influence. He darkens the carnal mind, he sways and rules the stubborn will; he excites and inflames the vitious [vicious; Ed.] affections, and imperiously rules in the children of disobedience. He is therefore styled the prince and god of this world. And what more contumelious [contemptuous attitude; Ed.] indignity can there be, than to prefer to the glorious Creator of heaven and earth, a damned spirit the most cursed part of the whole creation? more particularly, sin strikes at the root of all the divine attributes.

(1.) It is contrary to the unspotted holiness of God, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. Of all the glorious and benign constellations of the divine attributes which shine in the law of God, his holiness hath the brightest lustre. God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works: but the most precious and venerable monument of his holiness is the law. This is a true draught of his image, and a clear copy of his nature and will. It is the perspicuous rule of our duty, without any blemish or imperfection. See what a high encomium [a formal text that expresses high praise for somebody; Ed.] the apostle gives it, “the commandment is holy, just, and good,” (Romans 7:12). It enjoins nothing but what is absolutely good, without the least mixture and tincture of evil. It is a full and complete rule, in nothing defective, and in nothing superfluous, but comprehends the whole duty of man. The sum of it is set down by the apostle, (Titus 2:11). We are to live soberly, i.e. we are to abstain from everything that may blemish and stain the excellency of our reasonable nature. We are to live righteously. This respects the state and situation wherein God hath placed us in the world for the advancing of his glory. It includes and comprehends in it all the respective duties we owe to others, to whom we are united by the bands of nature, of civil society, or of spiritual communion. And we are to live godly, which takes in all the internal and outward duties which we owe to God, who is the Sovereign of our spirits, whose will must be the rule, and his glory the end of all our actions. In short the law is so contrived and framed, that abstracting from the authority of the Lawgiver, its holiness and goodness lays an eternal obligation upon us to obey its dictates. Now, sin is directly and formally a contrariety to the infinite sanctity and purity of God; consisting in a not doing what the law commands, or in doing that which it expressly forbids; and God cannot look upon it, but with infinite detestation, (Habakkuk 1:13). He cannot but hate that which is opposite to the glory of his nature, and to the lustre of all his perfections.

(2.) Sin vilifies the wisdom of God, which prescribed the law to men as the rule of their duty. The divine wisdom shines resplendently in his laws. They are all framed with an exact congruity to the nature of God, and his relation to us, and to the faculties of man before he was corrupted. And thus the divine law being a bright transcript both of God's will and his wisdom, binds the understanding and will, which are the leading faculties in man, to esteem and approve, to consent to and choose, all his precepts as best. Now, sin vilifies, the infinite wisdom of God, both as to the precepts of the law, the rule of our duty, and the sanction annexed to it for confirming its obligation. It taxes the precepts as an unequal yoke, and as too severe and rigid a confinement to our wills and actions. Thus the impious rebels complained of old, "The ways of the Lord are not equal." They are injurious to our liberties, they restrain and infringe them, and are not worthy of our study and observation. And it accounts the rewards and punishments which God has annexed as the sanction of the law to secure our obedience to its precepts, weak and ineffectual motives to serve that purpose. And thus it reflects upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver as lame and defective, in not binding his subjects more firmly to their duty.

(3.) Sin is a high contempt and horrid abuse of the divine goodness, which should have a powerful influence in binding man to his duty. His creating goodness is hereby contemned, which raised us out of the dust of the earth unto an excellent and glorious being. Our parents were indeed instrumental in the production of our bodies; but the variety and union, the beauty and usefulness, of the several parts, was the high design of his wisdom, and the excellent work of his hands. Man's body is composed of as many miracles as members, and is full of wonders. The lively idea and perfect exemplar of that regular fabric was modeled in the divine mind. This affected David with holy admiration, (Psalms 139:14-16). The soul, or principal part, is of a celestial original, inspired by the Father of Lights. The faculties of understanding and election are the indelible characters of our honor and dignity above the brutes, and make us capable to please God and enjoy our Maker. Now, God's design in giving us our being was to communicate of his own fullness to, and to be actively glorified by intelligent creatures, (Revelation 4:11). None are so void of rational sentiments, as not to own, that it is our indispensable duty and reasonable service to offer up ourselves an entire living sacrifice to the glory of God. What is more natural, according to the laws of uncorrupted reason, than that love should correspond with love? As the one descends in benefits, the other should ascend in praise and thankfulness. Now, sin breaks all these sacred bonds of grace and gratitude, which engage us to love and obey our Maker. He is the just Lord of all our faculties, intellectual and sensitive; and the sinner employs them all as weapons of unrighteousness to fight against God. Again, it is he that upholds and preserves us by the powerful influence of his providence, which is a renewed creation every moment, daily surrounding us with many mercies. All the goodness which God thus bestows upon men, the sinner abuses against him. This is the most unworthy, shameful, and monstrous ingratitude imaginable. This makes forgetful and unthankful men more brutish than the dull ox or stupid ass, who serve and obey those that feed and keep them. Yea it sinks them below the insensible part of the creation, which invariably observes the law and order prescribed by the Creator. This is astonishing degeneracy. It was the complaint of God himself; "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," (Isaiah 1:2).

(4.) The sinner disparages the divine justice, in promising himself peace and safety, notwithstanding the wrath and vengeance that is denounced against him by the Lord. He labors to

dissolve the inseparable connection that God hath placed between sin and punishment, which is not a mere arbitrary constitution, but founded upon the desert of sin, and the infinite rectitude of the divine nature, which unchangeably hates it. The sinner sets the divine attributes a contending as it were with one another, presuming that mercy will disarm justice, and suspend its power by restraining it from taking vengeance upon impenitent sinners. And thus sinners become bold and resolute in their impious courses, like him mentioned, who said, “I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst,” (Deuteronomy 29:19). This casts such an aspersion on the justice of God, that he solemnly threatens the severest vengeance for it; as you may see in Deuteronomy 29:20; “The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.”

(5.) Sin strikes against the omniscience of God, and at least denies it implicitly. There is such a turpitude adhering to sin, that it cannot endure the light of the sun, nor the light of conscience, but seeks to be concealed under a mask of virtue or a veil of darkness. What is said of the adulterer and the thief, is true in proportion of every sinner, “If a man sees them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.” And hence it is, that many who would blush and tremble if they were surprised in their sinful actings by a child or a stranger, are not at all afraid of the eye of God, though he narrowly notices all their sins in order to judge them, and will judge them in order to punish them.

(6.) Lastly, Sin bids a defiance to the divine power. This is one of the essential attributes of God that makes him so terrible to devils and wicked men. He hath both a right to punish and power enough to revenge every transgression of his law that sinners are guilty of. Now, his judicial power is supreme and his executive power is irresistible. He can with one stroke dispatch the body to the grave, and the soul to the pit of hell, and make men as miserable as they are sinful: and yet sinners as boldly provoke him as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated Syrians, how they foolishly thought that God the protector of Israel had only power on the hills but not in the valleys, and therefore renewed the war to their own destruction. Thus proud sinners enter the lists with God and range an army of lusts against the armies of heaven, and, being blindly bold, run on headlong upon their own ruin. They neither believe God’s all-seeing eye, nor fear his almighty hand. You see then what an evil sin is in its nature. It is high rebellion against God, and strikes at the root of all his attributes.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. If ye would see your sins, look to the law of God. That is the glass wherein we may see our ugly face. Hence the apostle says, “I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,” (Romans 7:7). Look to it for what is past and present, in order to your being humbled in the sight of a holy God. Look to it for your direction, if you would shun the fatal rocks of sin for the time to come. It is not what this man says, but what the word of God says, that is to be the rule of your duty.

2. See here what presumption it is in men to make that duty which God has not made so, and that sin which God has not made so in religion. This is for men to set themselves in God’s room, and their will for the divine will. This is true superstition, however far the guilty seem to themselves and others to be from it. And in this too many of different denominations agree, making that duty and sin which God never made so. In this general they agree, however they differ in particulars. This is

expressly forbidden; “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it,” (Deuteronomy 4:2). Remarkable is the reason of this prohibition, “that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” For to both agrees what our Lord said, “Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?” (Matthew 15:3). Witness the deep ignorance of matters of salvation and the power of godliness, wherein many are kept by reason of these principles, which have no footing in the word of God.

3. Flee to Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin, for his blood and Spirit to remove the same. All the waters of the sea will not wash it out, but that blood alone. And repent and forsake your sin, or it will be your ruin.

Consider it is the greatest evil.

For,

(1.) It is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the greatest good; and that which is most contrary to the greatest good, must needs be the greatest evil. It may be looked on as the nadir [lowest point; Ed.] to zenith. The devil is not so contrary to God: for God gave the devil a being, but not sin. It is sin that makes the devil opposite to God; it is the master, he the scholar. The fire is hotter than the water which it heats. Sin fights against God; it is a deicide; and, as one says, the sinner so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God. Sin is a dethroning of God, yea it strikes at his being. It musters up its forces in the open field against God, and when it is beaten from thence, it has its strong holds to go to; yea, like the thief on the cross, when it is crucified, it spits its venom against him. It, is a walking contrary to him; and it rises against him even to the last gasp.

(2.) Sin is the mother of all evils that ever were or shall be. It is the big-bellied monster that is delivered daily of all other evils as its births. It is that which has brought forth all the fire-brands that ever were. What cast the angels out of heaven, or Adam out of paradise? Sin draws the sword against nations, makes women husbandless, mothers childless, and brings on wars, famine and pestilence. Personal evils, whether on soul or body, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are all from sin. It must needs then be the greatest evil.

(3.) Sin is the concluding stroke of wrath on the soul. It is that to which people are entirely given up. And what is it that makes hell in the world, that God gives as the last stroke after all the rest? Why, it is to give up the soul to sin; “Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee,” (Ezekiel 24:13). That is the doom, “Let him that is filthy be filthy still.” He that was delivered up to Satan, was restored again: but we never hear of any being restored who were given up to themselves. Better be given up to the devil than to sin.

03.02. Of Our Fall in Adam

OF OUR FALL IN ADAM

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans 5:19 This text consists of two propositions. The first is, By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners. Where consider, 1. Who that one man was. It was Adam. This is plain from Romans 5:14 and to no other can it agree.

2. What that disobedience of his was. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. This was that sin that first broke into the world, and opened the door to death, (Romans 5:12). This was the transgression of Adam, that offence (Romans 5:14) or fall, the offence of one (Romans 5:15), or, as the Greek will bear, the one offence “tou henos paraptomati,” here called disobedience, for thereby he hearkened to the devil, not to God.

3. Whom it concerned; many. This is in effect the same with the all mentioned, (Romans 5:14). But the alteration of the phrase is not without reason: for there is an exception here of the man Christ, of whom he speaks in the next clause. It reached many men, but not all simply; he, and he only, was excepted.

4. How it touched them; they were made sinners by it. Now, there are only two ways how men might be made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, viz. either by imputation or imitation. The last is not meant. (1.) Because some of those many who are made sinners; are not capable of imitation or actual sin, viz. infants. (2.) Because we are made righteous, not by the imitation, but imputation, of Christ’s righteousness; but as we are made righteous by the one, so we are made sinners by the other.

5. The foundation of this imputation, which is a relation betwixt the one and the many here implied; for unless there had been some bond of union betwixt the one and many, the sin of that one could not have been imputed to the many. There was indeed a natural bond betwixt him and us: but this was not the ground of the imputation; for we have such an union with our immediate parents, whose sin is not thus imputed. It behooved then to be a moral bond, by the way of a covenant, he being the representative of many in the covenant of works. From these words there arises this doctrine, viz.

Doctrine: “The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.” In discoursing this doctrine, I shall show, I. What sin of Adam’s it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in.

II. Who they were that sinned and fell in Adam.

III. How the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us.

IV. Conclude with some inferences.

I. I am to show what sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. That sin is also their sin. This was the sin that broke the covenant of works. Other sins of Adam are not imputed to them, more than those of any other private persons. For he was a head only of obedience, not of suffering. So then, Adam quickly betaking himself to the covenant of grace, and placing himself under another head as a private man, ceased to be the head in the covenant of works. Adam had all his children in one ship to carry them to Immanuel's land; by his negligence he dashed the ship on a rock, and broke it all in pieces; and so he and his lay foundering in a sea of guilt: Jesus Christ lets out the second covenant as a rope to draw them to the shore. Adam for himself lays hold onto, while others hold by the broken boards of the ship, till they be by the power of grace enabled to quit them too, as he was.

II. I proceed to show who they were that sinned and fell in Adam. They were all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation. So,

1. Christ is excepted. Adam's sin was not imputed to the man Christ. This is plain from Hebrews 7:26. He was separated from sinners, and was not infected with the plague whereof he was to be the cleanser. And so Christ comes not in under Adam as head, but, as in the text, is opposed to Adam as another head.

Christ was indeed a Son of Adam, as appears from his genealogy brought up to Adam, (Luke 3:1-38). And it was necessary he should be so, that he might be our near kinsman, and that the same nature that sinned might suffer. But he came not of him by ordinary generation: the extraordinariness of his descent lay in that he was born of a virgin. And upon this account he came not in under Adam in the covenant of works; for Christ was not born by virtue of that blessing of marriage given before the fall, (Genesis 1:28) but by virtue of a covenant-promise made after the fall, (Genesis 3:15). So that Adam could represent none in that covenant, but such as were to spring from him by virtue of that blessing.

2. All mankind besides sinned and fell with Adam in that first transgression. His sin of eating the forbidden fruit is imputed to them; i.e. is reckoned theirs, as if they had committed it. Consider,

(1.) The scripture plainly testifies, that all sinned in him; "By one man's sin, death entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," (Romans 5:12). Hence it is plain, that death has not come into the world but in pursuit of sin; all die, for all have sinned. Infants are not exempted more than others. We see graves of an infant's length; yea, sometimes the womb is made their grave, and they get a coffin instead of a cradle. It is long ere infants laugh, but they come into the world crying; a sure evidence of misery. What have they done? What could they do? Yet God is just, and is not pursuing innocents. What then can be the quarrel but this, that they are taken prisoners for the debt contracted by their father? (Romans 5:14).

(2.) All fell with him into misery by that sin. Now, a just God will not involve the innocent with the guilty in the same punishment. Consider,

[1.] All fell under the guilt of eternal wrath for that sin; "The judgment was by one to condemnation….By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation," (Romans 5:16, Romans 5:18). Now, where there is a communion of guilt there must needs be a communion

of sin; for the law can bind none over to punishment but for sin. “All die in Adam,” (1 Corinthians 15:22) says the apostle, but it is only the soul that sins that shall die, (Ezekiel 18:4) therefore all sinned in Adam.

[2.] All fell under the loss of God’s image, and the corruption of nature with him. How comes it that all men must say with David, “Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me?” (Psalms 2:5). Take away the imputation of Adam’s sin, and there is no foundation for the corruption of nature. It must be some sin that God punishes with the deprivation of original righteousness, which can be no other than the first sin of Adam.

[3.] All the punishments inflicted on Adam and Eve, for that sin, as specified in Genesis 3:1-24 are common to mankind, their posterity; and therefore the sin must be so too.

III. I come now to show how the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us. The great reason of this is, because we are all included in Adam’s covenant. The covenant was made with him, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. Consider here,

1. It was the covenant of works that was made with Adam, the condition whereof was perfect obedience. This was the first covenant. As for the covenant of grace, it was made with the second Adam.

2. It was made with him for himself. That was the way he himself was to attain perfect happiness; his own stock was in that ship.

3. It was made not only for himself, but for all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation. So that he was not here as a mere private person, but as a public person, the moral head and representative of all mankind. Hence the scripture holds forth Adam and Christ, as if there had never been any but these two men in the world; “The first man is of the earth, earthy, (says he): the second man is the Lord from heaven,” (1 Corinthians 15:47). And this he does, because they were two public persons, each of them having under them persons represented by them, (Romans 5:14, Romans 5:18).

“Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” This is plain from the imputation of Adam’s sin, which necessarily requires this as the foundation of it. We being thus included and represented in that covenant, what he did he did as our head, and therefore it is justly imputed to us. But some may be ready to say, we made not choice of Adam for that purpose. Ans. (l.) God made the choice, who was as meet to make it for us as we for ourselves. And “who art then that repliest against God,” (Romans 9:20). (2.) Adam was our natural head, the common father of us all, (Acts 17:26) and who was so meet to be trusted with the concerns of all mankind as he? But to clear further the reasonableness of this imputation, and to still the murmuring of proud nature against the dispensation of God, consider,

1. Adam’s sin is imputed to us, because it is ours. For God doth not reckon a thing ours, which is not so; “The judgment of God is according to truth,” (Romans 2:2). For God’s justice doth not punish men for a sin which is in no way theirs. And it is our sin upon the account aforesaid. Even

as Christ's righteousness is ours by virtue of our union with him. As if a person that has the plague infect others, and they die, they die, by their own plague, and not by that of another.

2. It was free for God, antecedently to the covenant made with man, either to have annihilated all mankind, or if he had preserved them, to have given them no promise of eternal life in heaven, notwithstanding by natural justice they would have been liable to his wrath in case of sin. Was it not then an act of grace in God to make such a rich covenant as this? and would not men have consented to this representation gladly in this case?

3. Adam had a power to stand if he would, being made after the image of God, (Genesis 1:26). He was set down with a stock capable to be improved to the eternal upmaking of all his posterity. So that he was as capable to stand as any afterwards could be for themselves: and this was a trial that would soon have been over, while the other would have been continually a-doing, had men been created independent on him as their representative.

4. He had natural affection the strongest to engage him. He was our father, and all we the children that were in his loins, to whom we had as good ground to trust as to any other creature.

5. His own stock was in the ship; his all lay at stake as well as ours. Forgetting our interest, he behooved to disregard his own, for be had no separate interest from ours.

6. If he had stood, we could never have fallen; he had gained for us eternal happiness; the image of God, and the crown of glory, would have descended from him to us by a sure conveyance. And is it not reasonable, on the other hand, that if he fell, we should fall and bear the loss? No man quarrels, that when a master sets his land in tack to a man and his heirs upon conditions, if the first possessor break the bargain, the heirs be denuded of it.

7. Lastly, All that quarrel this dispensation must renounce their part in Christ: for we are made righteous by him, as sinners are made guilty by Adam. If we fall in with the one, why not with the other? We chose Christ for our head in the second covenant, no more than we did Adam in the first covenant. A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

1. Hence see the dreadful nature of sin; one sin could destroy a whole world. What a plague of plagues must this sin be, that has swept away not families, towns, and countries only, but the whole race of mankind! View it in this glass, if you would know it aright.

2. Let this be a lesson to parents. Adam's fall should be a watch-word to every parent, to endeavor by all means to do nothing that may bring ruin on their children. Many times children are destroyed by their parents through their bad example, and their omission of exercising proper discipline and correction on them. Ye that are parents, give your children a good and pious example, accompanied with wholesome precepts and instructions. And watch over and narrowly observe their behavior, and pray for and with them, that they may be delivered from wrath and condemnation.

3. This doctrine affords a lesson of humility to all. The rich have no cause to boast of their wealth and abundance; for they have a sad heritage left to them; and the poor and needy have the very same. If one man be better than another, no thanks to us; for we are all alike by nature.

4. Hence view and wonder at the redemption purchased for poor fallen sinners by the obedience and death of Christ. Behold here the necessity of it: What could they do for their help that came into the world under a sentence of condemnation? —the seasonableness of this deliverance, when the sentence was passed on all: —the perfection of it; it takes away this first sin, and all others too. How strong must the power of the grace of Christ be, that could stop the torrent of Adam's sin, when increased with innumerable actual transgressions? (Romans 5:16)

5. Lastly, Quit your hold of the first Adam and his covenant, and come to and unite with Christ by faith, and lay hold on his covenant, (1 Corinthians 15:22). Flee to and make use of his blood for the taking away of the first sin in particular, and mourn for it before the Lord. If this be not removed, it will ruin you. And to stir you up to a concern about this sin, consider how we are naturally writing after this copy, by our unbelief of the word, our affecting mainly what is forbidden, &c. as I showed before. The offer of Christ as a Saviour from sin is made to you; and ye are called to embrace him as a Saviour to you in particular. Accept the offer, as ye regard the salvation of your souls; otherwise you will be ruined, not only by the breach of the first covenant, but by despising the second, which is the only means devised by infinite wisdom for the recovery of fallen sinners.

03.03. Of the First Sin in Particular

OF THE FIRST SIN IN PARTICULAR

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” Genesis 3:6-7 In these words we are distinctly informed how the covenant of works was broken, and our first parents stripped of their primitive innocence and integrity. Eve seduced by the devil, first ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her example. The act being completed by both, they immediately discovered, to their shame and dishonor, the miserable state they were reduced to. The words sufficiently found the following doctrine.

Doctrine: “Our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit.”

I have already shown why the forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as also of what use it was in the covenant of works. It remains that we skow, I. How the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell.

II. Why this fruit was forbidden.

III. The aggravations of it.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to show how the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell. It is not to be thought, that they were wholly innocent till they had the forbidden fruit in their mouths; for their coveting it in their hearts behooved of necessity to go before that; but the eating of it was that whereby their sin and apostasy from their Creator was completed. The first step of their sin seems then to be doubting and unbelief of the threatening, (Genesis 3:4, Genesis 3:6). Their faith as to the truth of the threatening being first foundered, their heart plied to the temptation; and then succeeded a lust after the forbidden fruit; and then the sin was completed by their actually eating it, as in the words of the text.

Satan, the old serpent, very artfully laid his train for enticing our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit. For he attacked the woman when alone, at a distance from her husband; he endeavored to make her doubt of the truth of the divine threatening; he presented the fatal object, as fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise: he pretended a higher regard for them than their sovereign Creator, who, he tacitly insinuated, grudged their happiness: and he used means to persuade them, that they should be like God, in the vast extent of their knowledge, upon their eating the delectable morsel. Thus the eyes of their mind were first blemished by a mist from hell; which being admitted, gradually darkened their understanding, so that first doubting, and then disbelief of the threatening, ensued. Their will was easily conquered to a compliance with the

temptation; then a corrupt affection to the tree seized them, discovering itself in a lustful looking at it: then the hand took it, and the mouth ate it, and the fatal morsel was swallowed.

II. I am next to show why this fruit was forbidden.

1. It was not because God grudged the happiness of our first parents, as the devil blasphemously alleged, whom the event proved a liar, (John 8:44). Nor yet,

2. Because there was any evil in the fruit itself; for that could not be; for we are told, (Genesis 1:1-31. ult.) that, at the close of the creation everything was very good. This fruit was not forbidden because it was evil, but it was evil because it was forbidden. It was forbidden for the trial of man's obedience. Not that God knew not what was in man, and what he would be, but to discover the creature's weakness to himself without God, and that he might thence take occasion of advancing his own glory impaired by the sin of man, in a more illustrious manner than if innocent Adam had continued in his primitive state. But it may be asked, Why did God make choice of this for the trial of man? I answer, God did so most reasonably. For,

(1.) This being a thing in itself indifferent, was most meet for the trial of his obedience. For hereby his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, which would have been the plainest evidence of obedience. Had it been to love God or his neighbor, nature itself taught him to do so, and by the natural make of his soul he was inclined to this. What trial would that have been to a man newly created, and loaded with benefits from God, not to take another god, worship images, or take his name in vain, when he saw all to be God's creatures or servants; to keep the sabbath, which was to return once a-week only? He had no father or mother to honor, none to kill but her that was his own flesh, none to commit adultery with, none to steal from, none to bear false witness against, none to covet their goods. Thus the prohibition of a thing in itself indifferent was a proper test, and the only proper test for the trial of man.

(2.) Thus man's obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous, being in an external thing whereof his very senses might he judge; which could not be in the internal acts of obedience.

(3.) This was most proper for asserting the sovereign dominion of God, who had set him down in a beautiful paradise, and made him lord of the world. Was it not very reasonable that God should keep one single tree from him, as a testimony of his holding God as his great Landlord?

(4.) This was most useful and necessary to man, as a memorandum of the state wherein he was created. For man was created with a free will to good, whereof the tree of life was an evidence but also to evil, whereof the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an evidence. So that in effect it was a continual watchword to him, and a beacon set up before him to beware of dashing on the rock of sin.

(5.) It was a great mercy to man, in that, beside the natural make of his soul, which was turned towards God as his chief happiness and end, he had this prohibition set to keep it in that posture. For as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hand, (Exodus 17:12) so man had the fabric of his body looking upward, and this fair tree forbidden him, to teach him that his happiness lay not in the creatures, but in God. So that this tree being forbidden was a sign of emptiness hung before the creature's door, with that inscription, Here is not your rest; the creature's hand pointing man away

from themselves to God, as the alone fountain of happiness.

(6.) Lastly, This was a compend of the whole law of God, wherein all was summarily comprehended, viz. love to God, and his neighbor, as will afterwards be made appear.

III. I come now to consider the evil of this first sin. Some may be ready to say, Was not the eating of the forbidden fruit a little sin? So it appears indeed in the sight of blind man, whose eye being put out with it, sees not the great majesty of God, and the horrid evil of the action. But indeed it was more horrible if ye consider, 1. The aggravations of it.

2. The nature of it.

3. The effects of it.

First, Let us view the aggravations of this first sin. Consider,

1. The person who did it. I may say it was not a sinner that sinned, but an innocent person, free from all inclination to evil; one whom God made able to stand if he would, and endued with the image of God, without any mixture of sinful ignorance, perverseness of will, or irregularity of affections. No wonder to see a man with a poor stock soon broken: but that a man who had such a large stock should play the bankrupt, was horrid indeed.

2. What was the thing for which he broke the command. Achan had a wedge of gold to tempt him, and Judas thirty pieces of silver to entice his covetous disposition. But what was the enticing object in Adam's case? The fruit of a tree: a small thing indeed: but the smaller the thing was, the more inexcusable the sinner, whom Satan could draw after him by so slender a thread. What need had he of that, when God had given him abundance of other fruit? But, with David, Adam spares his own flock, and takes his neighbor's one lamb.

3. The persons wronged by this sin. He sinned against God himself, to whom he owed the strictest obedience; against his soul and body, upon which he brought wrath and a curse; against all his posterity, who were then in his loins, upon whom his sin has entailed a scene of evils, under which the human race will groan to the end of time. Never did one sin strike against so many at once.

4. The time of this transgression. Man was scarcely well come out of the hand of his Creator, till he lifted up his heel against him. He stood very short while, till he turned giddy with ambition, and fell into disgrace. It is thought probable, he fell the same day he was created; and such an early revolt from his allegiance was a very high aggravation of his sin.

5. The place where the crime was committed. In paradise, where every plant and flower were proclaiming the glory of God, and where he wanted nothing that was necessary for him. In the presence-chamber, as it were, he struck at his Sovereign Lord and King. So his offence was aggravated like the murder of Zacharias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, (Matthew 23:35).

Secondly, The nature of this sin. It was not one single sin, but a complication of all evils, a violation of the whole law of God, and a total apostasy from him in heart, lip, and life. This was a sin whereby at one touch both the natural and positive law was trampled under foot; yea, by which all the ten commandments were struck at, at once.

1. Did they not chose new gods: when, by eating this fruit, they made their belly their god; self their god; nay the devil their god, when they conspired with him against God, being filled with pride and ambition as he to be like God; when they believed the devil and mistrusted God, and shook off the yoke of his dominion, turning rebels to him, and being most unthankful for the divine goodness expressed towards them? Rebel-man set up a trinity, (1.) Of his belly, for sensuality. (2.) Of himself, by ambition; and, (3.) Of the devil, by believing him, and disbelieving his Creator.

2. Though man at first received, yet he did not observe that great ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. He contemned that ordinance which God had most plainly appointed, and would needs carve out to himself how he would serve the Lord.

He took the name of the Lord his God in vain, despising his attributes, whereby he makes himself known, his justice, truth, power, &c. Profaning God's ordinance, that sacramental tree; abusing his word, by not giving credit to it; and abusing his works, that creature which he should not have touched; and violently misconstructing the work of providence, as if God, by that act of forbidding them that tree, had minded to keep them from happiness. And therefore though there was no man to punish them, God suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment.

4. He was so far from remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, that he put himself out of all case for serving God ere it came, by this means. He kept not that state of rest wherein God had placed him.

5. Adam honored not his Father in heaven. Both our first parents minded not their relative duties. Eve forgets herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; and Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation too, and so confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. Therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. He was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this act he was a child-murderer, cutting the throats of all his posterity; and he was a self-murderer too.

7. Our first parents were fain to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, which their luxury and sensuality had brought them too.

8. Adam committed theft; and was but a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own, against the will of the great Owner. He was the Achan in the camp.

9. He bare false witness against the Lord, when he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was an avouching, that God's word was not to be believed, that the Lord dealt hardly and scrimptly with him, and grudged his happiness.

10. He was discontented with that happy state wherein God had placed him, he was not content with his lot, and therefore, like another king of Babylon, he coveted an evil covetousness to his house; which ruined both himself and them.

Thirdly, Consider the effects of this first sin.

1. God was robbed of his glory, that he should have had from the creature's active obedience. He was made and well qualified for glorifying his Creator; but breaking covenant with God, and falling

under the curse of the law, he was quite indisposed for that work. He could aim no more at this mark which God set before him.

2. God's image was defaced; the King of Heaven's picture was rent in pieces. What a huge offence would it be to come into a workman's shop, and with one touch dash in pieces a curious piece of work that he had made? Yet thus offensively did Adam behave, spurning at the image of God, and quite defacing it from his soul.

3. Adam and all his posterity were ruined by this fatal transgression. It opened the sluice to all that flood of miseries that has overspread the face of the earth. At this gate sin and death entered into the world, where they will reign till time shall be no more. God is just and holy; and if the first sin had not deserved this punishment, it would not have been inflicted with such a mark of indignation.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Say not when ye are tempted, it is but a little sin and therefore ye may act it. Consider, that which in the commission is but as the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, when God comes to judgment, or conscience gets up, will cover the face of the heavens. Little do ye know what a small temptation may be big with. A man may drown in a little rivulet as well as in the deep sea.

2. Then God's will is a sufficient bar to hold us back from anything if we would be safe. And therefore let us know, that where there is no more to be a hedge to us but the bare command of God, if we leap over it, a serpent will bite us. Ah! how few know what it is to be restrained by a bare command of God! Ah! the generality leap over the hedge of God's will and law, and live as if fear were no restraint upon them from the God of heaven, who will severely punish all transgressions of his law.

3. Beware of the pleasure of your senses, and the pride of life. The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh ruined the world at first, and do so still. The devil shoots his darts by the eye into the soul, which is weaker now than it was in the primitive state, and more liable to deception. Therefore watch your eyes and ears. Have a care of sensuality. Eating ruined Adam and Eve; and still ruins many, who eat not for God or his glory, but to satisfy their sensual appetite, as they did.

4. Lastly, O prize Christ, who to redeem lost man, did hang upon a tree, and drink the cup of wrath as the bitter fruits of sin, and was buried in a garden. The first Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and Christ hung on the cursed tree. Adam's preposterous love to his wife made him sin, and Christ's love to his spouse made him suffer. Our first parents pleased their sensual appetite with the taste of the pleasant fruit of the forbidden tree, and therefore Christ got vinegar mixed with gall to drink upon the cross-tree. Adam sinned in a garden, and in a garden was Christ buried. By eating the forbidden fruit, death came upon all men to condemnation; and by eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, life is brought to the soul. O then, sinners, flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away; and ye shall be reinstated in all that happiness and favor with God which he forfeited by eating the forbidden fruit.

Chapter 40

04.00. The Art of Man Fishing

The Art of Man Fishing by Thomas Boston

04.00i. Introduction

Introduction

AH! Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? This day seems to be a day of darkness and gloominess; the glory is departed even to the threshold of the temple. We may call ordinances Ichabod; and name the faithful preachers of Scotland no more Naomi, but Mara, for the Lord deals bitterly with them, in so much forsaking his ordinances as at this day. The Lord hath forsaken them in a great measure, as to success attending their labors. They toil all the night; but little or nothing is caught; few or none can they find to come into the net. So that Jeremiah's exercise may be theirs, 'If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears' (Jeremiah 13:17) And thou, O my soul, mayst make this thy exercise, if thou hadst a heart that could mourn either for thyself or others. Though indeed it is no great wonder that God does not countenance with much success the like of me, who (if I may or dare class myself among those that are faithful) am the meanest, the most unworthy of them all, not worthy to take his covenant in my mouth, who am a child in piety and the mystery of godliness, though not in years; who am a poor fool, having a weak heart and a shallow head; who might rather be learning of others than teaching them; who can but wade about the outer parts of that depth, into which others can enter far; who have so little love to Christ, and so little pure zeal for his glory; can say so little for the truth, and so little against error; who am altogether unworthy and insufficient for these things; no wonder, I say, God does not countenance me, when others, that are as tall cedars in the Lord's vineyard, do so little good, even others that are great men in the church for piety and learning. But yet seeing I am called out to preach this everlasting gospel, it is my duty to endeavor, and it is my desire to be (Lord, thou knowest) a fisher of men.

But, alas! I may come in with my complaints to my Lord, that I have toiled in some measure, but caught nothing, for anything I know, as to the conversion of any one soul. I fear I may say, I have almost spent my strength in vain, and my labor for naught, for Israel is not gathered. O my soul, what may be the cause of this, why does my preaching so little good? No doubt part of the blame lies on myself, and a great part of it too. But who can give help in this case but the Lord himself? and how can I expect it from him but by prayer, and faith in the promises, and by consulting his word, where I may, by his Spirit shining on my heart, (shine, O Sun of righteousness), learn how to carry, and what to do, to the end the gospel preached by me may not be unsuccessful?

Therefore did my heart cry out after Christ this day, and my soul was moved, when I read that sweet promise of Christ: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19), directed to those that would follow him. O how fain would my soul follow him, as on other accounts, so on this, that I might be honored to be a fisher of men; therefore my soul would fain know what sort of following Christ this is, to which this sweet promise is annexed. I would know it, (Lord, thou knowest), that I might do it, and so catch poor souls by the gospel, and that I might know whether I have a right to this promise or not.

O let thy light and thy truth shine forth, that they may be guides to me in this matter; and let the meditations of my heart be according to thy mind, and directed by thy unerring Spirit. Grant light and life, O Lord my God.

Chapter 42

04.01. PART 1: THE PROMISE AND THE DUTY

PART ONE: THE PROMISE AND THE DUTY Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. In these words there are two things to be considered.

1. There is a duty, Follow me

Wherein consider first the object, me, even the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief fisher of men, who was sent by the Father to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel, who was and is the infinitely wise God, and so knew the best way to catch men, and can instruct men how to be fishers of others.

Next, consider the act, Follow (Gr. come after) me: Leave your employment, and come after me. Though no doubt there is a direction here to all the ministers of the gospel, that have left their other employments, and betaken themselves to the preaching of the word, vis., that if they would do good to souls, and gain them by their ministry, then they are to imitate Christ, in their carriage and preaching, to make him their pattern, to write after his copy, as a fit mean for gaining of souls.

2. There is a promise annexed to the duty Wherein we may consider:

(a) The benefit promised; that is to be made fishers of men; which I take to be not only an investing of them with authority, and a calling of them to the office, but also a promise of the success they should have, that fishing of men should be their employment, and they should not be employed in vain, but following Christ, they should indeed catch men by the gospel.

(b) The fountain cause of this, I, I will make you; none other can make you fishers of men but me.

Thou mayest observe first then, O my soul, that it is the Lord Jesus Christ that makes men fishers of men. Here I shall shew:

(1) How Christ makes men fishers of men.

(2) Why unconverted men are compared to fish in the water.

(3) That ministers are fishers by office.

HOW DOES CHRIST MAKE MEN FISHERS OF MEN? In answer to this question, consider spiritual fishing two ways: first, as to the office and work itself; and second, as to the success of it.

First, he makes them fishers as to their office, by his call, which is twofold, outward and inward, by setting them apart to the office of the ministry; and it is thy business, O my soul, to know whether thou hast it or not. But of this more afterwards.

Second, he makes them fishers as to success; that is, he makes them catch men to himself by the power of his Spirit accompanying the word they preach, and the discipline they administer: The preaching of the cross - unto us which are saved, is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much

assurance (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

He it is that brings sinners into the net which ministers spread; and if he be not with them to drive the fish into the net, they may toil all the night, and day too, and catch nothing.

O my soul, then see that gifts will not do the business. A man may preach as an angel, and yet be useless. If Christ withdraw his presence, all will be to no purpose. If the Master of the house be away, the household will loath their food though it be dropping down about their tent doors.

Why shouldst thou then, on the one hand, as sometimes thou art, be lifted up when thou preachest a good and solid discourse, wherein gifts do appear, and thou gettest the applause of men? Why, thou mayst do all this, and yet be no fisher of men. The fish may see the bait, and play about it as pleasant, but this is not enough to catch them. On the other hand, why shouldst thou be so much discouraged (as many times is the case), because thy gifts are so small, and thou art but as a child in comparison of others? Why, if Christ will, he can make thee a fisher of men, as well as the most learned rabbi in the church: Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength (Psalms 8:2). Yea, hast thou not observed how God owned a man very weak in gifts and made him more successful than others that were far beyond him in parts? Has not God put this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power might be seen to be of him? Lift up thyself then, O my soul, Christ can make thee a fisher of men, however weak thou art. Follow thou him. My soul desires to follow hard after thee, O God! Be concerned then, in the first place, O my soul, for the presence of God in ordinances, and for his power that will make a change among people (Psalms 110:3). When thy discourse, though ever so elaborate, shall be but as a lovely song, O set thyself most for this. When thou studiest, send up ejaculations to thy Lord for it. When thou writest a sermon, or dost ruminate on it, then say to God, 'Lord, this will be altogether weak without thy power accompanying it.'

O power and life from God in ordinances is sweet. Seek it for thyself, and seek it for thy hearers. Acknowledge thine own weakness and uselessness without it, and so cry incessantly for it, that the Lord may drive the fish into the net, when thou art spreading it out. Have an eye to this power, when thou art preaching; and think not thou to convert men by the force of reason: if thou do, thou wilt be beguiled.

What an honorable thing is it to be fishers of men! How great an honor shouldst thou esteem it, to be a catcher of souls! We are workers together with God, says the apostle. If God has ever so honored thee, O that thou knewest it that thou mightst bless his holy name, that ever made such a poor fool as thee to be a co-worker with him. God has owned thee to do good to those who were before caught. O my soul, bless thou the Lord. Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me to this?

Then seest thou not here what is the reason thou toilest so long, and catchest nothing? The power comes not along. Men are like Samuel, who when God was calling him, thought it had been Eli. So when thou speakest many times, they do not discern God's voice, but thine; and therefore the word goest out as it comes in.

Then, O my soul, despair not of the conversion of any, be they ever so profligate. For it is the power of the Spirit that drives any person into the net; and this cannot be resisted. Mockers of religion, yea, blasphemers may be brought into the net; and many times the wind of God's Spirit in

the word lays the tall cedars in sin down upon the ground, when they that seem to be as low shrubs in respect of them, stand fast upon their root. Publicans and harlots shall enter the kingdom of heaven before self-righteous Pharisees.

What thinkest thou, O my soul, of that doctrine that lays aside this power of the Spirit, and makes moral suasion all that is requisite to the fishing of men? That doctrine is hateful to thee. My soul loaths it, as attributing too much to the preacher, and too much to corrupt nature in taking away its natural impotency to good, and as against the work of God's Spirit, contrary to experience; and is to me a sign of the rottenness of the heart that embraces it. Alas! that it should be owned by any among us, where so much of the Spirit's power has been felt. BUT WHY ARE UNCONVERTED MEN COMPARED

TO FISH IN THE WATER?

Among other reasons, they are so because as the water is the natural element of fish, so sin is the proper and natural element for an unconverted soul. Take the fish out of the water, it cannot live; and take from a natural man his idols, he is ready to say with Micah, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? The young man in the gospel could not be persuaded to seek after treasure in heaven, and lay by the world. It is in sin that the only delight of natural men is; but in holiness they have no more delight than a fish upon the earth, or a sow in a palace.

Oh, the woeful case of a natural man! Bless the Lord, O my soul, that when that was thy element as well as that of others, yet Christ took thee in his net, held thee, and would not let thee go, and put another principle in thee, so that now it is heavy for thee to wade, far more to swim in these waters. The fish in a sunny day are seen to play themselves in the water. So the unregenerate, whatever grief they may seem to have upon their spirits, when a storm arises, either without, by outward troubles, or within by conscience gnawing convictions, yet when these are over, and they are in a prosperous state, they play themselves in the way of sin, and take their pleasure in it, not considering what it may cost them at the last. Oh! how does prosperity in the world ruin many a soul! The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. And how destructive would prosperity have been to thee, O my soul, if God had given it to thee many times when thou wouldst have had it! Bless the Lord that ever he was pleased to cross thee in a sinful course. As the fish greedily look after and snatch at the bait, not minding the hook; even so natural men drink in sin greedily, as the ox drinketh in the water. They look on sin as a sweet morsel; and it is to them sweet in the mouth, though bitter in the belly. They play with it, as the fish with the bait; but, Oh! alas, when they take the serpent in their bosom, they mind not the sting (Proverbs 9:17-18). The devil knows well how to dress his hooks; but, alas! men know not by nature how to discern them.

Pity then, O my soul, the wicked of the world, whom thou seest greedily satisfying their lusts. Alas! they are poor blinded souls; they see the bait, but not the hook; and therefore it is that they are even seen as it were dancing about the mouth of the pit; therefore rush they on to sin as a horse to the battle, not knowing the hazard. O pity the poor drunkard, the swearer, the unclean person, etc., that is wallowing in his sin.

Bless thou the Lord also, O my soul, that when thou wast playing with the bait, and as little minding the hook as others, God opened thine eyes, and let thee see thy madness and danger, that thou mightst flee from it. And be now careful that thou snatch at none of the devil's baits, lest he catch

thee with his hook, for though thou mayst be restored again by grace, yet it shall not be without a wound; as the fish sometimes slip the hook, but go away wounded; which wound may be sad to thee, and long a-healing. And this thou hast experienced. As fish in the water love deep places and wells, and are most frequently found there, so wicked men have a great love to carnal security, and have no will to strive against the stream. Fish love deep places best, where there is least noise. Oh, how careful are natural men to keep all quiet, that there may be nothing to disturb them in their rest in sin! They love to be secure, which is their destruction. O my soul, beware of carnal security, of being secure, though plunged over head and ears in sin. As fish are altogether unprofitable as long as they are in the water, so are wicked men in their natural estate, they can do nothing that is really good: they are unprofitable to themselves, and unprofitable to others: what good they do to others, is more per accidens [by accident] than per se [by or in itself] (Romans 3:12).

How far must they then be mistaken, who think the wicked of the world the most useful in the place where they live! They may indeed be useful for carrying on designs for Satan's interest, or their own vain glory; but really to lay out themselves for God, they cannot.

MINISTERS ARE FISHERS BY OFFICE

They are catchers of the souls of men, sent 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God'. Preachers of the gospel are fishers, and their work and that of fishers agree in several things. The design and work of fishers is to catch fish. This is the work that preachers of the gospel have taken in hand, even to endeavor to bring souls to Christ. Their design in their work should be the same.

Tell me, O my soul, what is thy design in preaching? For what end dost thou lay the net in the water? Is it to show thy gifts, and to gain the applause of men? Oh, no! Lord, thou knowest my gifts are very small; and had I not some other thing than them to lean to, I had never gone to a pulpit. I confess that, for as small as they are, the devil and my corruptions do sometimes present them to me in a magnifying glass, and so would blow me up with wind. But, Lord, thou knowest it is my work to repel these motions. An instance of this see in my Diary. Their work is hard work; they are exposed to much cold in the water. So is the minister's work. A storm that will affright others, they will venture on, that they may not lose their fish. So should preachers of the gospel do.

Fishers catch fish with a net. So preachers have a net to catch souls with. This is the everlasting gospel, the word of peace and reconciliation, wherewith sinners are caught.

It is compared to a net wherewith fishers catch fish, first, because it is spread out, ready to catch all that will come into it:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

God excludes none from the benefits of the gospel that will not exclude themselves; it is free to all.

Second, because as fish are taken unexpectedly by the net, so are sinners by the gospel. Zaccheus was little thinking on salvation from Christ when he went to the tree. Paul was not thinking on a sweet meeting with Christ, whom he persecuted, when he was going post-hast on the devil's errand; but the man is caught unexpectedly. Little wast thou thinking, O my soul, on

Christ, heaven or thyself, when thou went to the Newton of Whitsome to hear a preaching, when Christ first dealt with thee; there thou got an unexpected cast.

Third, as fish sometimes come near and touch the net, and yet draw back; so many souls are somewhat affected at the hearing of the gospel, and yet remain in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. So Herod heard John the Baptist gladly, but yet the poor man was not caught. Wonder not then, O my soul, that thou seest some affected in the time of preaching; and yet when they are away again, all is worn off.

Fourth, some fish that have not been taken fast hold enough by the net, struggle, and get out again. So some souls have their convictions, and may seem to be caught; but yet, alas! they stifle all their convictions, stay in the place of the breaking forth; their goodness is like the morning cloud, and as the early dew that soon passeth away. Wherefore, O my soul, if ever thou be taken up with exercised consciences, have a care that thou do not apply the cure before the wound be deep enough. Take all means to understand whether the soul be content to take Christ on his own terms or not. Alas! many this way, by having the wound scuffed over, are rather killed than cured.

Fifth, all that are taken in the net do make some struggling to get free. Even so every one whom the Lord deals with by his word and Spirit, make some kind of resistance before they are thoroughly caught. Cras, Domine, says Augustin; et modo, Domine, donec, modo non haberet modum. And this thou also knowest, O my soul, how thou wouldst have been content to have been out of the net. Oh! the wickedness of the heart of man by nature! opposite is it, and an enemy to all that may be for its eternal welfare. There is indeed a power in our will to resist, yea, and such a power as cannot but be exercised by the will of man, which can do nothing but resist, till the overcoming power of God, the gratia victrix, come and make the unwilling heart willing (Php 2:13).

Sixth, yet this struggling will not do with those which the net has fast enough. So neither will the resistance do that is made by an elect soul, whom God intends to catch: All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me (John 6:37). Indeed, God does not convert men to himself against their will, he does not force the soul to receive Christ; but he conquers the will, and it becomes obedient. He that was unwilling before, is then willing. O the power of grace! When God speaks, then men shall hear; then is it that the dead hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear do live.

Seventh, in a net are many meshes in which the fish are caught. Such are the invitations made to sinners in the gospel, the sweet promises made to them that will come to Christ; these are the meshes wherewith the soul is catched. This then is gospel preaching, thus to spread out the net of the gospel, wherein are so many meshes of various invitations and promises, to which if the fish do come, they are caught.

Eighth, lest the net be lifted up with the water, and so not fit for taking fish, and the fish slight it and pass under it; there are some pieces of lead put to it to hold it right in the water that it may be before them as they come. So lest invitations and promises of the gospel be slighted, there must be used some legal terrors and law-threatenings to drive the fish into the net. Thou seest then that both law and gospel are to be preached, the law as a pendicle of the gospel net, which makes it effectual; the law being a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Ninth, the meshes must not be over wide, lest the fish run through. So neither must thy doctrine be general, without particular application, lest thou be no fisher of men. Indeed men may be the better pleased, when thou preachest doctrine so as wicked men may run out through and in-through it, than when thou makest it so as to take hold of them; but be not a servant of men.

Tenth, neither must they be too neat and fine, and curiously wrought, lest they hold out the fish. So have a care, O my soul, of striving to make by wit any fine and curious discourse, which thy hearers cannot understand. Of this more afterwards.

Fishers observe in what places they should cast their nets, and where they may expect fish. So do thou, O my soul, observe where thou mayst catch souls.

There are two pools wherein the net should be set; in the public assemblies of the Lord's people. There it was that Lydia's heart was opened. The pool of ordinances sometimes is made healing water to souls pining away in their iniquity. The second place to set a net is in private conference. Many times the Lord is pleased to bless this for the good of souls. Some have found it so. But more of these things afterwards, when I come to following Christ.

Fishers may toil long, and yet catch nothing; but they do not therefore lay aside their work. So may preachers preach long, and yet not catch any soul (Isaiah 49:4, and Isaiah 53:1) but they are not to give up for all that.

O my soul, here thou art checked for thy behavior at some times under the absence of Christ from ordinances, when thou has been ready to wish thou hadst never taken it in hand. This was my sin: the good Lord pardon it. It becomes me better to lie low under God's hand, and to inquire into the causes of his withdrawing his presence from me and from ordinances, and yet to hold on in duty till he be pleased to lay me by. Have a care of that, O my soul, and let not such thoughts and wishes possess thee again. Forget not how God made thee to read this thy sin, in thy punishment (Diary, November 13, 1698).

Hold on, O my soul, and give not way to these discouragements. Thou knowest not but Christ may come and teach thee to let down the net at the right side of the ship, and thou mayst yet be a fisher of men. Trust God thou shalt yet praise him for the help of his countenance as thou has done, and perhaps for some souls that thou mayst be yet honored to catch.

PART TWO: HOW MAY I COME BY THIS ART? And thus I have briefly considered these things. But the main question that I would have resolved is, How may I come by this art? What way I shall take to be a fisher of men? How I may order and set the net, that it may bring in souls to God? This the great Master of assemblies sets down in the first part of the verse.

Observe, O my soul, that the way for me to be a fisher of men, is to follow Christ. What it is to follow thee, O Lord, shew me; and, Lord, help me to do it.

Here two things are to be considered:

(1) What following Christ supposes and implies.

(2) Wherein Christ is to be followed.

WHAT FOLLOWING CHRIST SUPPOSES AND IMPLIES 1. It presupposes life A dead man cannot follow any person; a dead preacher cannot follow Christ; there must be a principle of life, spiritual life in him, or else he is naught. Therefore have I said and maintained, that a man cannot be a minister in foro Dei [in the court of God], though he may in foro ecclesiae [in the court of the church], without grace in his heart. This is a spiritual following of Christ; and therefore presupposes a spiritual and heavenly principle.

Tell me then, O my soul, what state art thou in? Thou wast once dead, that is sure, dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Art thou raised out of thy grave? Hast thou got a part in the first resurrection? Has Christ breathed on thy dead and dry bones? Or art thou yet void of spiritual life? Art thou rotting away in thine iniquity? What sayest thou to this? If thou be yet dead, thy case is lamentable; but if thou be alive, what signs of life are there to be seen in thee?

I have my own doubts of this, because of the prevailing of corruption: therefore I will see what I can say to this. A man that hath the Spirit hath life (Romans 8:2, Romans 8:9) but I think I have the Spirit: ergo, I have life. That I have the Spirit, I conclude from these grounds following.

1. I have light that sometimes I had not The Comforter … shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

I see now otherwise than sometimes I saw. Once was I blind, but now I see, though I see but men as trees. Once was I darkness, but now am I light (though weak) in the Lord. This light makes me see:

(a) My former darkness, the sad and miserable state that once I was in, ignorant of God, Christ, and religion, save going to the church, and keeping from banning and swearing, etc., which I was restrained from, from a child. This makes me see my present darkness (1 Corinthians 13:12). How little a portion do I know of thee, O God? My knowledge is but as the twilight.

(b) It lets me see my heart sins, my imperfections and shortcomings in the best of my duties; so that God might damn me for them. The hypocrites say, Why have we fasted, and thou seest not? (Isaiah 58:3). It lets me see the wanderings of my heart in duty and out of duty, yea, the sinfulness of the first risings of lust in mine heart (Romans 7:1-25), and is still discovering the baseness of my heart unto me, so that I am forced to think and say that at the best I am unclean, unclean.

(c) It makes me to see Christ precious (1 Peter 2:7), altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand, preferable to all the world; for whom if my heart deceive me not (Lord, thou knowest), I would undergo the loss of that which I most esteem in the world. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.' For indeed, 'My heart and flesh faints and fails; but thou art the strength of my heart, O LORD' (Psalms 73:25-26).

(d) It lets me see my need of him; so that nothing else but Christ, I am persuaded, can help me. When I have done what I can, I am but an unprofitable servant. If I should do a thousand times more than I do, I count all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. My soul cries out for thee, O God, and follows hard after thee.

(e) The knowledge that I have of Christ makes me trust in him in some measure (Psalms 9:10), though alas! my evil heart of unbelief creates a great deal of difficulty in that to me. I find him a present help in the time of trouble; therefore I endeavor to cast my burden upon him. I know him to

be a good Master, and therefore I lean on him for help for his own work. I know his grace is sufficient for me; therefore in temptation and trials, I endeavor to lift up my soul to him.

2. I feel help in duty from the Spirit

I know not what I should pray for; but the Spirit helpeth my infirmities (Romans 8:26). Many times I have gone to prayer very dead, and have come away with life; I have gone with a drooping and fainting heart, and come away rejoicing; with an heart closed, and have come away with an heart enlarged, and have felt enlargement both as to words and affections; and this hath made me both thankful and more vile in mine own eyes, that God should have done so with the like of me (1 Chronicles 29:14).

He that hath sense and feeling hath life; but I have sense and feeling; ergo, I have life (Ephesians 4:19). My sins are a burden to me (Matthew 11:28). Lord, thou knowest my omissions and commissions, the sins of my thoughts and of my life, the sins of my youth, and above all, that which is my daily trouble, an evil, backsliding and base heart, which I find deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). This body of sin and death makes me to groan, and long to be rid of it (Romans 7:24). And what a load it was to me this day, God knows. I feel God's presence, which makes me to rejoice sometimes; at other times again I feel his absence. Thou, O Lord, hidest thy face, and I am troubled (Psalms 30:7). His smiles are sweet as honey from the comb, and his frowns are bitter as death to my soul.

He in whom there is heat hath life; but I have a heat in my soul; ergo, I have life. I find a threefold flame, though weak, in my heart.

1. A flame of love to Christ (Romans 5:5) My soul loves him above all; and I have felt my love to Christ more vigorous within this short while than for a considerable time before. Lord, put fuel to this flame.

I have a love to his truths that I know, what God reveals to me of his word (Psalms 119:19). I find sometimes his word sweeter to me than honey from the comb (Psalms 19:10). It comforts and supports me. I cannot but love it; it stirs me up, and quickens my soul when dead.

I love his commands, though striking against my corruptions (Romans 7:22).

I love the promises, as sweet cordials to a fainting soul, as life from the dead to one trodden under foot by the apprehensions of wrath, or the prevailing of corruption.

I love his threatenings as most just; my soul heartily approves them. If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema, maranatha. The least part of truth, that God makes known to me, I love; and, by grace, would endeavor to adhere to.

I love those in whom the image of God does appear; though otherwise mean and contemptible, my heart warms towards them (1 John 3:14).

I love his work, and am glad when it thrives (Rom. 1:8), though alas! there is little ground for such gladness now.

I love his ordinances (Psalms 84:1) and what bears his stamp; though all this be but weak, I love his glory, that he should be glorified, come of me what will.

2. I find in my heart a flame of desires after the righteousness of Christ (Matthew 5:6) My soul earnestly desires to be stript naked of my own righteousness, which is as rags, and to be clothed and adorned with the robe of his righteousness. This wedding garment my soul affects; so shall I be found without spot, when the Master of the feast comes in to see the guests. My soul is satisfied, and acquiesces in justification by an imputed righteousness, though, alas! my base heart would fain have a home-spun garment of its own sometimes.

I also find in my heart a flame of desires after communion with him (Psalms 42:1). When I want it my soul though sometimes careless, yet, at other times, cries out, O that I knew where I might find him! I have found much sweetness in communion with God, especially at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in prayer and meditation, hearing the word faithfully and seriously preached, and in preaching it myself, when the candle of the Lord shines on my tabernacle; then was it a sweet exercise to my soul.

I endeavor to keep it up when I have it, by watching over my heart and sending up ejaculations to God. When I want it, I cry to him for it, though, alas! I have been a long time very careless. Sometimes my soul longs for the day, when my minority shall be over-past and I be entered heir to the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; to be quit of this evil world; to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all; especially at three times.

(a) When I get more than ordinarily near God, when my soul is satisfied as with marrow and fat, when my heart is nobilitated, and tramples on the world.

(b) When I am wrestling and groaning under the body of sin and death, the evil heart: then fain would I be there, where Satan cannot tempt, and sin cannot enter; yea, when I have been much forsaken, at least as to comfort (Diary, August 2, 1696, where is the most eminent instance of it).

(c) When I preach, and see the gospel hath not success, but people are unconcerned, and go on in their abominations.

3. I find in my heart some heat of zeal for God, which vents itself first, by endeavoring to be active for God in my station. So when I was at K. I endeavored to do something for God, though, alas! it did some of them no good. Before I entered on trials, one main motive was to have opportunity to give a testimony against sin, and to see if I could be an instrument to reclaim any soul from their wicked way. This I have, as the Lord enabled me, done since I was a preacher, testifying against sin freely and plainly, and as earnestly as I could, by grace assisting me, though in weakness. And, Lord, thou knowest that my great desire is to catch men, and to get for that end my whole furniture from thee, laying aside my own wisdom, And if I could do this, how satisfying would it be to my soul, that desires to do good to others, though I myself should perish?

Therefore do I not spare this weak body, and therefore have I desired never to be idle, but to go unsent for sometimes. Yet my conscience tells me of much slackness in this point, when I have been in private with people and have not reproved them as I ought when they offended, being much plagued with want of freedom in private converse. This I have in the Lord's strength resolved against, and have somewhat now amended it.

Second, it vents itself in indignation against sin in myself and others. Many times have I thought on that of the apostle, Yea, what revenge! when I have been overcome by a temptation, being content

as it were to be revenged on myself, and as it were content to subscribe a sentence of damnation against myself, and so to justify the Lord in his just proceedings against me. And, Lord, do not I hate those that hate thee! am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? The reproaches cast on thee, have fallen on me (Psalms 69:9). And my heart rises and is grieved when I see transgressors, that they keep not thy law.

Third, it vents itself in grieving for those things that I cannot help. Lord, thou knowest how weighty the sins of this land have been unto me, how they have lien and do lie somewhat heavy on me; and at this time in particular, the laxness of many in joining with the people of these abominations, the unfaithfulness of some professors, the lack of zeal for God in not making a more narrow search for the accursed thing in our camp, now when God's wrath is going out violently against us, and not making an acknowledgment of sins and renewing our national vows, according as our progenitors did, many as it were thinking shame of the covenant, of whom the Church of Scotland may be ashamed.

Growth and motion is an evidence of life (Psalms 92:12-14). I move forward toward heaven, my affections are going out after Christ, and endeavoring to make progress in a Christian walk. I think I discern a growth of these graces in me.

(1) A growth of knowledge and acquaintance with Christ (2 Peter 3:18). I am more acquainted with Christ and his ways than before. Though I have not such uptakings of Christ as I ought to have, yet I have more than I have had in this respect sometimes before.

(2) A growth of love. If my heart deceive me not, I have found love to Christ within this month more lively and vigorous than before, my soul more affected with his absence from ordinances than ever.

(3) A growth of faith. I can, I think, trust God more now than before. I have had more experience of his goodness and knowledge of his name; and therefore think I can cast my burden on the Lord better than before. But it is easy swimming when the head is held up. Lord, increase my faith. I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief.

(4) A growth of watchfulness. I have felt the sad effects of unwatchfulness over my heart in times past. I feel the good of watchfulness now; my soul is habitually more watchful than before; neither dare I give such liberty to my heart as sometimes I gave. Yet for all this the Lord may well complain of me, that he is broken with my wanton heart. But, Lord, thou knowest it is also breaking to myself that it is so. The Lord seal these things to me.

(5) A growth of contempt of the world, which, blessed be God, is on the increase with me.

2. Following Christ implies a knowledge of the way that Christ took No man can follow the example of another as such, unless he know what way he lived. So neither can any man follow Christ with respect to the catching of men in particular, unless he know Christ's way of catching souls, that is, so far as it may be followed by us. Acquaint then thyself, O my soul, with the history of the gospel wherein this appears, and take special notice of these things, that thou mayest follow Christ. What a sad case must they be in that are not acquainted with this!

3. Following Christ supposes sense of weakness, and the need of a guide A man that knows a way and can do well enough without a guide, needs not follow another. And surely the want of this

is the reason why many run before Christ, and go farther than his example ever called them; and others take a way altogether different from Christ's way, which is the product of their own conceited hearts and airy heads. But thou, O my soul, acknowledge thyself as a child in these matters, that cannot go unless it be led; as a stranger in a desert place that cannot keep their right way without a guide. Acknowledge and be affected with thine own weakness and emptiness, which thou mayst well be persuaded of. And of this end reflect seriously:

(1) On that word: Who is sufficient for these things? (2 Corinthians 2:16). No man is of himself sufficient; even the greatest of men come short of sufficiency. This may make thee then to be affected with insufficiency, who are so far below these men, as shrubs are below the tall cedars; and yet they cannot teach it of themselves.

(2) Consider the weight of the work, even of preaching, which is all that thou hast to do now. It is the concern of souls. By the foolishness of preaching it pleases the Lord to save them that believe; and as thou thoughtest yesterday (January 22, 1699) before thou went to the pulpit, it may seal the salvation of some, and the damnation of others. To preach in the Spirit, in the power and demonstration thereof, is no easy matter. Thy pitiful gifts will not fit thee for this.

(3) Reflect on what thou art when God is pleased to desert thee: how then thou tuggest and rowest, but it will not do, either in studying or delivering sermons. I think thou hast had as much of this as may teach thee to beware of taking thy burden on thy own soul, but to cast it on the Lord. (See Diary, June 3, July 3, December 31, 1698; January 6, 1699, etc.)

(4) Consider what a small portion thou knowest of God. When thou art at the best, and when thou art in thy meridian, yet how low art thou? And how far short thou comest of what thou shouldst be at.

(5) Consider that though thou hadst gifts like an angel, yet thou canst not convert a soul unless Christ be with thee to do the work. Therefore acknowledge thyself a weak creature, insufficient for the work; and go not out in thy own strength, but in the name of the Lord; and so although thou be but as a stripling, thou mayst be helped to cast down the great Goliaths that defy the armies of the living God.

4. Following Christ implies a renouncing of our own wisdom

It must not be the guide that we must follow (Matthew 16:24). Paul would not preach with wisdom of words (1 Corinthians 1:17), he did not follow the rules of carnal wisdom.

Therefore, O my soul, renounce thine own wisdom. Seek the wisdom that is from above; seek to preach the words of the living God, and not thine own. Since thou wast most set to take this way, and prayed most that thou mightst not preach that which might be the product of thy own wisdom and natural reason, but that which might be given thee of the Holy Ghost, thou hast found that God hath signally countenanced thee.

Take not the way of natural wisdom, follow not the rules of carnal wisdom. Its language will always be, Master, spare thyself; have a care of thy credit and reputation among men. If thou speak freely, they will call thee a railer, and thy preaching reflections; every parish will scare at thee as a monster of men, and one that would preach them all to hell; and so thou shalt not be settled. Such and such a man, that has a great influence in a parish, will never like thee. That way of preaching

is not the way to gain people; that startles them at the very first. You may bring them on by little and little, by being somewhat smooth, at least at the first: for this generation is not able to abide such doctrine as that thou preachest. But hear thou and follow the rules of the wisdom that is from above: for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God; that which is in high esteem among men, is naught in the sight of God. The wisdom that is from above will tell thee, that thou must be denied to thy credit and reputation, etc. (Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:26). It will tell thee, Let them call thee what they will, that thou must cry aloud, and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet etc. (Isaiah 58:1). It will tell thee that God has appointed the bounds of men's habitation (Acts 17:26). It will tell thee that not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called (1 Corinthians 1:26). Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, thou shalt speak God's words unto them (Ezekiel 2:7). It will shew thee rules quite contrary to those of carnal wisdom. Let me consider then what carnal wisdom says to me, and what the wisdom from above says.

CARNAL WISDOM - SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Thy body is weak, spare it, and weary it not; it cannot abide toil, labor, and weariness; spare thyself then. Your body is God's as well as your spirit; spare it not for glorifying God (1 Corinthians 6:20). 'In weariness and painfulness' (2 Corinthians 11:27). 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength' (Isaiah 40:29). This thou hast experienced. Labor to get neat and fine expressions; for these do very much commend a preaching to the learned; and without these they think nothing of it. Christ sent thee to 'preach the gospel not with wisdom of words' (1 Corinthians 1:17). Go not to them with 'excellency of speech, or of wisdom' (1 Corinthians 2:1). Let not thy speech and preaching be with 'the enticing words of man's wisdom' (verse 4). Endeavor to be somewhat smooth in preaching, and calm; and do not go out upon the particular sins of the land, or of the persons to whom thou preachest. 'Cry aloud, and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet: shew my people their sins' (Isaiah 58:1). 'Open rebuke is better than secret love' (Proverbs 27:5). 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth' (2 Timothy 2:15). If thou wilt not do so, they will be irritated against thee, and may create thee trouble; and what a foolish thing would it be for thee to speak boldly to such a generation as this, whose very looks are terrible! 'He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue' (Proverbs 28:23). I have experience of this. 'Fear them not, neither be afraid at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. I have made thy face strong against their faces' (Ezekiel 3:8-9). Experience confirms this. It is a dangerous way to speak freely, and condescend on particulars; there may be more hazard in it than thou art aware of. 'He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely' (Proverbs 10:9). 'Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved' (Proverbs 28:18). Thou wilt be looked on as a fool, as a monster of men; thou wilt be called a railer, and so lose thy reputation and credit, and thou hadst need to preserve that. Men will hate and abhor thee; and why shouldst thou expose thyself to these things? 'Thou must become a fool, that thou mayest be wise' (1 Corinthians 3:18). 'We are made a spectacle to the world' (1 Corinthians 4:9-10). 'The servant is not greater than his lord,' (John 15:20, compared with John 10:20), 'He hath a devil, and is mad, why hear ye him?' If thou wilt be Christ's disciple, 'thou must deny thyself' (Matthew 16:24). 'If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you,' (John 15:18) says our Lord. Great people especially will be offended at you, if you speak not fair to them and court and caress them. And if you be looked down upon by great people, who are wise and mighty, what will you think of your preaching? 'Accept no man's person, neither give flattering

titles to man: for, in so doing, thy Maker will soon take thee away' (Job 32:21-22). 'Few of the rulers believe on Christ' (John 7:48). 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called' (1 Corinthians 1:26). 'Speak thou God's word to kings, and be not ashamed' (Psalms 119:46). Our people are new come out from under Prelacy, and they would not desire to have sins told particularly, and especially old sores to be ripped up. They cannot abide that doctrine. Other doctrine would take better with them. Hold off such things; for it may well do them ill. It will do them no good. 'Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious' (Ezekiel 2:7). 'Give them warning from me. If thou do it not they shall die in their sins, but their blood will I require at thy hand' (Ezekiel 3:17-18). 'What the Lord saith to thee, that do thou speak' (1 Kings 22:14). If you will preach such things, yet prudence requires that you speak of them very warily. Though conscience says you must, yet speak them somewhat covertly, that you may not offend them sore, and especially with respect to them that are but coming in yet, and do not fill them with prejudices at first; you may get occasion afterwards. 'Cry aloud, and spare not' (Isaiah 58:1). 'Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully' (Jeremiah 48:10). 'Handle not the word of the Lord deceitfully.' Peter, at the first, told the Jews that were but coming in to hear, 'Him (Christ) ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain' (Acts 2:23). 'Work while it is called today; the night cometh werein thou canst not work' (John 9:4). Be but fair especially to them that have the stroke in parishes, till you be settled in a parish to get stipend. If you will not do so, you may look for toiling up and down then; for parishes will scare at you, and will not call you, and how will you live? And so such a way of preaching will be to your loss, whereas otherwise it might be better with you. 'To have respect of persons is not good; for, for a piece of bread that man will transgress' (Proverbs 28:21). 'The will of the Lord be done' (Acts 21:14). 'God hath determined your time, before appointed, and the bounds of your habitation' (Acts 17:26). 'And his counsel shall stand, oppose it who will' (Isaiah 46:10). 'It is God that sets the solitary in families' (Psalms 68:6). 'If thou be faithful, thou shalt abound with blessings; but if thou makest haste to be rich, thou shalt not be innocent'

Thus thou seest, O my soul, how that carnal wisdom, notwithstanding it speaks fair and with a good deal of seeming reason, is quite contrary to the wisdom that is from above. It promiseth fair, but its promises are not always performed; it threatens sore, but neither do its threatenings always come to pass: it makes molehills mountains, and mountains molehills: therefore reject the wisdom of the world, for it is foolishness with God. Carnal policy would make thee fear him that can but kill the body, yea that cannot do so much now, and to cast off the true fear of God.

O my soul, remember that word, and make use of it for strengthening thee: The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe (Proverbs 29:25). Never go to seek temporal profit by putting thy soul in hazard, but wait thou on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land (Psalms 37:34); for his way is the safest way, however carnal wisdom may speak otherwise of it and may account the following of it mere folly; but remember thou, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men (1 Corinthians 1:25).

5. Following Christ supposes, that we must not make men our rule, to follow them any farther than they follow Christ Be ye followers of me, says the apostle, as I am of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Wherein they follow Christ I may follow them, but in nothing else. All men are fallible; the greatest of men have had their own spots. Luther's opinion of Christ's corporal presence in the sacrament affords a notable instance of this.

Therefore, O my soul, let not man’s authority prevail with thee to go off the road at all. If Christ himself tell thee not, O my soul, where he feedeth, thou mayst be left to turn aside to the flocks of his companions. Have a care of putting the servants of the Lord in his own room: but follow thou him.

04.02. PART 2: HOW MAY I COME BY THIS ART?

WHEREIN IS CHRIST TO BE FOLLOWED?

What are those things in him that I must imitate him in? What was the copy that he did cast, which I must write after, in order to my being a fisher of men? What he did by divine power is inimitable; I am not called to follow him in converting sinners by my own power; to work miracles for the confirmation of the doctrine that I preach, etc. But there are some things wherein he is imitable, and must be followed by preachers, if they would expect to be made fishers of men.

First, Christ took not on him the work of preaching the gospel without a call: 'For (says he) the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound' (Isaiah 61:1). In this he must be followed by those that would be catchers of men. He was sent by the Father to preach the gospel; he went not to the work without his Father's commission. Men must have a call to this work (Hebrews 5:4). They that run unsent, that take on the work without a call from God, cannot expect to do good to a people (Romans 10:14; Jeremiah 23:1-40). I sent them not, therefore they shall not profit this people. Tell me then, O my soul, whether thou has thus followed Christ or not? Hadst thou a call from God to this work of the preaching of the gospel? Or hast thou run unsent? In answer to this, I must consider that there is a twofold call, an extraordinary and an ordinary call. The first of these I was not to seek, nor may I pretend to it. The question then is, Whether I had an ordinary call from God or not to preach the gospel?

There are these four things in an ordinary call which do make it up.

(1) Knowledge of the doctrine of the Christian religion above that of ordinary professors (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This I endeavored to get by study, and prayer unto the Lord; and did attain to it in some measure, though far below the pitch that I would be at. My knowledge was lawfully tried by the church, and they were satisfied.

(2) Aptness to teach, some dexterity of communicating unto others that knowledge (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:2). This was also tried by the church, and they were satisfied. This hath been acknowledged by others whom I have taught; and God has given me some measure of it, however small.

(3) A will some way ready to take on the work of preaching the gospel (1 Peter 5:2). This I had for anything I know, since ever the Lord dealt with my soul, unless it was in a time of distress. And though I did a long time sit the call of the church, in not entering on trials, when they would have had me, yet this was not for want of will but ability for the work, and want of clearness for entering on such a great work at that time.

I had notwithstanding some desire to that work, which desire my conscience bears me witness, did not arise from the desire of worldly gain; for I would have desired that then, and would go on in the

work now, though there were no such thing to be had by it, yea through grace, though I should meet with trouble for it.

Neither was it the love of vain glory, Lord, thou knowest, but that I might be capable to do something for God. I remember, that when I was a boy at the school, I desired to be a preacher of the gospel, because of all men ministers were most taken up about spiritual things. This my desire to the work did then run upon.

(4) The call of the church, which I had without any motion from myself, not only to enter on trials, but, being approved, to preach the gospel as a probationer for the ministry; which does say, that what I have done in this work, I have not done without a call from God in an ordinary way, and that I have not run unsent. For confirmation of this my call, I refer to my Diary, some things to this purpose being noted there, all which I cannot here set down. Perhaps, if leisure permit, I shall extract them by themselves in order. Blessed be the Lord that made my darkness as noon day.

Second, Christ designed his Father's glory in the work. It was not honor, applause, and credit from men that he sought, but purely the Father's glory. Men that design not this, cannot be useful to the church, if it be not per accidens [by accident]. This all actions are to level at; it is that which in all things should be designed as the ultimate end. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Thou seest then that thou, O my soul, must follow Christ in this, if thou wouldst be a fisher of men. Lift up thy heart to this noble end, and in all, especially in thy preaching of the gospel, keep this before thine eyes. Beware of seeking thy own glory by preaching. Look not after popular applause; if thou do, thou hast thy reward (Matthew 6:2), look for no more.

O my soul, invert not the order: 'Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred' (Song of Solomon 8:12)). Have a care of taking a thousand to thyself, and giving God only two hundred. Let his honor be before thine eyes; trample on thy own credit and reputation, and sacrifice it, if need be, to God's honor. And to help thee to this, consider:

(1) That all thou hast is given thee of God. What hast thou that thou hast not received? What an unreasonable thing is it then not to use for his glory what he gives thee; yea, what ingratitude is it? And dost thou not hate the character of an ungrateful person? Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris.

(2) Consider that what thou hast is a talent given thee by thy great Master to improve till he comes again. If thou improve it for him, then thou shalt get thy reward. If thou wilt make thy own gain thereby, and what thou shouldst improve for him, thou improve for thyself, what canst thou look for then but that God shall take thy talent from thee, and command to cast thee as an unprofitable and unfaithful servant into utter darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth?

God has given some great talents; if they improve them for vain-glory to themselves to gain the popular applause, or the Hosannas of the learned, and so sacrifice all to their own net; what a sad meeting will such have at the great day with Christ? What master would endure that servant, to whom he has given money wherewith to buy a suit of good clothes to his master, if he should take that money, and buy therewith a suit to himself, which his master should have had? How can it be thought that God will suffer to go unpunished such a preacher as he has given a talent of gifts to, if he shall use these merely to gain a stipend or applause to himself therewith, not respecting the

glory of his Master? Woe to thee, O my soul, if thou take this path wherein destroyers of men's souls and of their own go.

(3) Consider that the applause of the world is worth nothing. It is hard to be gotten; for readily the applause of the unlearned is given to him whom the learned despise, and the learned applaud him whom the common people care not for. And where it is got, what have you? A vain empty puff of wind. They think much of thee, thou thinkest much of thyself, and in the meantime God thinks nothing of thee. Remember, O my soul, what Christ said to the Pharisees: 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God' (Luke 16:15). Let this scare thee from seeking thyself.

(4) Consider, that seeking thy own glory is a dreadful and abominable thing.

First, in that thou then puttest thyself in God's room. His glory should be that which thou shouldst aim at, but then thy base self must be sacrificed too. O tremble at this, O my soul, and split not on this rock, otherwise thou shalt be dashed in pieces.

Second, in that it is the most gross dissembling with God that can be. Thou pretendest to preach Christ to a people; but seeking thy own glory, thou preachest thyself, and not him. Thou pretendest to be commending Christ and the ways of God to souls, and yet in the meantime thou commendest thyself. Will Christ sit with such a mocking of him? O my soul, beware of it; look not for it, but for his glory. Who would not take it for a base affront, to send a servant or a friend to court a woman for him, if he should court her for himself? And will not Christ be avenged on self preaching ministers much more?

Third, in that it is base treachery and cruelty to the souls of hearers, when a man seeks to please their fancy more than to gain their souls, to get people to approve him more than to get them to approve themselves to God. This is a soul murdering way, and it is dear bought applause that is won by the blood of souls. O my soul, beware of this. Let them call thee what they will but seek thou God's glory and their good.

(5) Consider that so to do is a shrewd sign of a graceless, Christless, and faithless heart: How can ye believe, that receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only? (John 5:44). A grain of faith will cure this lightness of the head and heart.

(6) Consider, O my soul, thy own vileness. What art thou but a poor lump of clay, as to thy body, that will soon return to the dust, and be a sweet morsel for the worms that now thou tramplest upon! Hast thou not seen how loathsome the body is many times in life, by filthy boils and other noisome diseases, and after death what an ugly aspect it has? Forget not the sight that thou sawest once in the churchyard of Dunse, how a body, perhaps sometimes beautiful, was like thin mortar, but much more vile and abominable. The time will come that thou wilt be such thyself. But what art thou as to thy heart, but a vile, base and ugly thing, so many filthy idols to be found there, like a swarm of the worst of vermin? Art thou not as a cage full of unclean birds! What thoughtest thou of thyself on Monday night, January 16, 1699? What unbelief sawest thou there, what baseness of every kind? And what day goes over thee, but thou seest still something in thee to humble thee? And what wast thou that God has employed in this work? Those that were sometime thy fellows are mean and despised; and wilt thou for all this seek thy own glory? Woe unto thee if

thou dost so.

(7) Consider, that 'him that honoureth God, God will honor; but he that despiseth him, shall be lightly esteemed.' Have respect, O my soul, with Moses, to the recompense of reward, and beware of preferring thy own to the interest of Christ, lest thou be classed among those that seek their own, and not the things of Christ.

(8) Consider what Christ has done for thee. Forget not his goodness, his undeserved goodness to such a base wretch as thou art. Remember him from the land of the Hermonites, and from Mizar-hill; and let love to him predominate in thee, and thou shalt then be helped to sacrifice all to his glory.

Third, Christ had the good of souls in his eye. He came to seek and save that which was lost; he came to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel. So he sent out the apostle to open the eyes of the blind, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Follow Christ in this, O my soul, that thou mayst be a fisher of men. When thou studiest thy sermons, let the good of souls be before thee; when thou preachest, let this be thy design, to endeavor to recover lost sheep, to get some brands plucked out of the burning; to get some converted, and brought in to thy Master. Let that be much in thy mind, and be concerned for that, whatever doctrine thou preachest.

Consider, O my soul, for this effect:

(1) What the design of the gospel is. What is it but this? This is the finis operis [end task]; and if it be not the finis operantis, it is very lamentable. It is the everlasting gospel that Christ has made manifest, declaring the will of God concerning the salvation of man.

(2) Consider wherefore God did send thee out. Was it to win a livelihood to thyself? Woe to them that count gain godliness; that will make the gospel merely subservient to their temporal wants. Rather would I perish for want than win bread that way. Well then, was it not to the effect that thou mightst labor to gain souls to Christ? Yea, it was. Have a care then that thou be not like some that go to a place, being sent thither by their master, but forget their errand when they come there, and trifle away their time in vanity and fooleries.

(3) Consider the worth of souls. If thou remember that, thou canst not but have an eye to their good. The soul is a precious thing which appears if thou consider:

(a) Its noble endowments, adorned with understanding, capable to know the highest object; will to choose the same; affections to pursue after it, to love God, hate sin, in a word, to glorify God here, and to enjoy him here and hereafter.

(b) I must live or die forever. It shall either enjoy God through all the ages of eternity, or remain in endless torments for ever more.

(c) No worldly gain can counter-balance the loss of it. 'What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

(d) It cost Christ his precious blood ere it could be redeemed. It behooved him to bear the Father's wrath, that the elect should have borne through all eternity; and no less would redeem it. So that

the redemption of the soul is indeed precious.

(e) Christ courts the soul. He stands at the door and knocks, to get in. The devil courts it with his baits and allurements. And wilt thou, O my soul, be unconcerned for the good of that which is so much courted by Christ and the devil both? Be ashamed to stand as an unconcerned spectator, lest thou show thyself none of the Bridegroom's friends.

(4) Consider the hazard that souls are in. Oh! alas, the most part are going on in the high way to destruction, and that blindfolded. Endeavor then to draw off the veil. They are as brands in the fire: wilt thou then be so cruel as not to be concerned to pluck them out? If so, thou shalt burn with them, world without end, in the fire of God's vengeance, and the furnace of his wrath, that shall be seven times more hot for unconcerned preachers than others.

(5) Consider what a sad case thou thyself wast in, when Christ concerned himself for thy good. Thou wast going on in the way to hell as blind as a mole; at last Christ opened thine eyes, and let thee see thy hazard, by a preacher (worthy Mr. H. Erskine) that was none of the unconcerned Gallios, who spared neither his body, his credit, nor reputation, to gain thee, and the like of thee. And wilt thou preach unconcerned for others? I should abhor myself as the vilest monster, in so doing. Lord, my soul rises at it when I think on it. My soul hates, and loathes that way of preaching: but without thee, I can do nothing. Lord, rather strike me dumb, than suffer me to preach unconcerned for the good of souls; for if dumb, I should murder neither my own soul, nor those of others.

(6) Consider that unconcernedness for the good of souls in preaching, argues:

(a) A dead lifeless heart, a loveless soul, with respect to Christ. If thou hast any life or love to Christ, darest thou be unconcerned in this matter? Nay, sure, he that has life will move; and he that hath love will be concerned for the propagating of Christ's kingdom.

(b) Unbelief of the threatenings of God especially. For if thou believe that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God, thou canst not preach to them as if thou wert telling a tale. If thou believe that they must depart into everlasting fire, thy heart will not be so frozen as to be unconcerned for them. The sight of it by faith will thaw thy frozen heart.

(c) A stupid heart, and so a hateful frame. Who would not abhor a watchman that saw the enemy coming on, if he should bid them only in the general provide to resist their enemies, or should tell them that the enemy were coming on, so unconcernedly as they might see he cared not whether they should live or perish? And what a hateful stupidity is it in a preacher of the gospel to be unconcerned for souls, when they are in such hazard?

(7) The devil shames such preachers. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and they, set to keep souls, creep about like a snail. He is in earnest when he tempts; but such are unconcerned whether people hear, or forbear to hear their invitations, reproofs, etc. Yea, how concerned are the devil's ministers that agent his business for him? They will compass sea and land to gain one proselyte. And shall the preachers of the gospel be unconcerned?

(8) If it be so that thou be unconcerned for the good of souls, it seems thou camest not in by the door, but hast broken over the wall, and art but a thief and a robber: 'He that is an hireling, seeth the wolf coming, fleeth, and leaveth the sheep, and the wolf catcheth them' (John 10:1 compared

with John 10:12); 'The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep' (John 10:13). O my soul, if at any time thou findest thy heart unconcerned then, not having the good of souls before thee, remember this.

(9) Thou canst not expect God's help, if thou forgettest thy errand. Hast thou not known and experienced that these two, God's help in preaching and a concernedness for the good of souls, have gone with thee pari passu [with equal pace; equally and simultaneously]? O my soul, then endeavor to be much in following of Christ this way, setting the good of souls before thine eyes; and if thou dost so, thou mayst be a fisher of men, though thou knowest it not.

Fourth, Christ had not only the good of souls before his eyes, but he was much affected with their case; it lay heavy on his spirit. There are these four things wherein this appeared, that occur to me, with which he was much affected.

He had compassion on the multitude, because they were as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). That the people wanted true pastors, was affecting to him; he had compassion on them. Follow Christ in this, O my soul; pity them that wander as sheep without a shepherd. And let this consideration move thee, when thou goest to preach in planted congregations, where thou wilt even see many that are wandering, though they have faithful pastors. Look on them as sheep not better for them than if they wanted a shepherd. But especially when thou goest to vacant congregations, pity them, commiserate their case, as sheep wanting a shepherd; which no doubt will be a notable means to make thee improve well the little time allowed thee for gathering them in. Be affected with their case; and for this end, consider:

(1) That such are in a perishing condition: Where no vision is, the people perish. They are ignorant, no wonder, they have none to instruct them; they have lean souls, no wonder, they have none to break the bread of life to them; they wander from God's way, they have none to watch over them, and so the devil takes his opportunity.

(2) Consider that for the most part here at least (this was written while I preached in the presbytery of Stirling) people are deprived of watchmen, in regard of the malignancy and ticklishness of their superiors; so that though the people would ever so gladly receive one to break the bread of life to them, yet they cannot get their will, by reason of these keeping it from them. It would make thy heart to relent if thou sawest a child that would be content to have a pedagogue to guide him, seeing he acknowledges he cannot do it himself, if notwithstanding his tutor should not allow him one, but stand in the way of it, and so the child be lost for want of a pedagogue. So, O my soul, commiserate thou the case of those who would fain have one to watch over their souls, but yet they that should employ their authority, power, wit, etc., to find out one for them, either lie by or oppose the same.

(3) Consider the many souls that go out of time into eternity, during the time that they want a shepherd. They have none to instruct them, none to let them see their hazard, none to comfort them when death comes, but they slip away, many of them at least, as the brutes that perish. Thou hast found this to have been a cause of thy commiserating such before now, when thou hast spoken to such being a-dying. If this be well considered, and laid to heart, thou canst not but pity them on that very account, which will stir thee up to employ the little time thou hast among them, so as they may be fitted for death.

Christ wept, because people in their day did not know, i.e. do, the things that belonged to their peace (Luke 19:41-42). When he thought upon this their stupidity, it made the tears trickle down his precious cheeks.

O my soul, thou hast this ground of mourning, this day, wherever thou goest. Who are they that are concerned to do what is necessary to be done in order to their peace with God? Few or none are brought in to Christ. It is rare to hear now of a soul converted, but most part are sleeping on in their sins in this their day, like to sit the day of God's patience with them, till patience be turned into fury.

Many heart melting considerations to this purpose may be found. I shall only say this in cumulo [in a heap], that such a case is most deplorable, in the noontide of the day that people should venture on the feud of such a dreadful enemy as God is, and should sit as quiet even when the sword of vengeance is hanging by a hair over their heads, and notwithstanding that every day may be, for ought I know, their last day, every sermon the last that ever they shall hear, and that ere the next day these enemies shall be made to encounter with the terrible and dreadful Majesty, who shall go through them as thorns and briers, and burn them up together, by the fire of his wrath, world without end.

O my soul, how canst thou think of this, and not be affected with the case of people as they are now-a-days? Sure, if thou couldst weep, here is ground enough for tears of blood.

He was grieved for the hardness of people's hearts (Mark 3:5). It was ground of grief to the Lord Jesus, that people were so hardened that no means used for their amendment would do them good. Follow Christ in this, O my soul; be grieved and affected with the hardness of the hearts of this generation. O what hardness of heart mayst thou see in every corner whither thou goest, and where thou preachest, most part being as unconcerned as the very stones of the wall; and say what thou wilt, either by setting before them alluring promises or dreadful threatenings, yet people are hardened against both, none relenting for what they have done, or concerned about it, though thou wouldst preach till thy eyes leap out.

O happy they whose time God has brought to a period, and taken to himself! Happy servants whom God has called out of the vineyard before the ground grow so hard that almost all labor was in vain! This is a time of mourning for the preachers of the gospel, for people are strangely hardened. Which is the more lamentable, O my soul, if thou consider:

(1) What God has done even for this generation. He has taken off from our necks the yoke of tyranny and arbitrary power, and has given deliverance from Prelatic bondage; and yet for all this the generation is hardened.

(2) How the Lord has been dealing with us by rods. For some time there was great dearth of fodder for beasts; yet that stirred us not up. Afterwards was death of cattle, yet we have not returned to the Lord. Then followed death of men, women and children. He has sent blasting among our corns. This is now, I suppose, the fourth year of our dearth. And for all these things we remain hardened. O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refuse to receive correction; they make their faces harder than a rock, they refuse to return. What shall be the end of such hardness as this?

(3) It is yet more lamentable, in regard the plague of hardness seems to be universal. It is not only the wicked, or openly profane, or those that have no religion, but the professors of religion that are hardened in part. Oh! my soul, this is a day wherein Scotland's pillars are like to fail, a day wherein the hands of our Moses are like to fall, and Amalek is like to prevail.

Many professors desire to hear the causes of God's wrath searched into, but they are not mourning over them; and truly it is most lamentable, that those among us who as so many Joshuas should be discovering the Achans in our camp, that are the troublers of Israel, but by a strange kind of dealing are very wary in meddling there-with, or to show them unto people. And it is much to be feared, that there are among us some accursed things that are not yet found out.

O that God would put it in the hearts of Zion's watchmen to discover what these Achans are, and that preachers were obliged even by the church to speak more freely of the sins of the land. But, alas! O Lord, why hast thou hardened all of us from thy fear?

(4) If thou consider, that this hardness of heart is a token of sad things yet to come. Who hath hardened himself against God, and prospered? (Job 9:4). Alas! it is a sad prognostic of a further stroke, that seeing we will not be softened either by word or rod, therefore the Lord will thus do to us; and seeing he will do thus, we may prepare to meet the Lord coming in a way of more severe judgment against us. Sad it is already; many families are in a deplorable condition, and yet nothing bettered by the stroke; and what a sad face will this land have, if it be continued! Spare, O Lord, thine inheritance, thy covenanted people, and make us rather fall on such methods as may procure the removal of the stroke. These, and many other things, O my soul, may indeed make thee grieved for the hardness of this generation.

Fifth, Christ, was much in prayer, and that before he preached (Luke 9:18). Follow him in this, O my soul. Thou hast much need to pray before thou preachest. Be busy with God in prayer, when thou art thinking on dealing with the souls of men. Let thy sermons be sermons of many prayers. Well doth prayer become every Christian, but much more a preacher of the gospel. Three things, said Luther, make a divine, tentatio, meditatio, et precatio [tenaciousness, contemplation, and prayer]. Be stirred up, O my soul, to this necessary work; and for this end consider:

(1) That thou canst not otherwise say of thy preaching, Thus saith the Lord. How wilt thou get a word from God, if thou do not seek it; and how canst thou seek it but by earnest prayer? If, otherwise, thou mayst get something that is the product of thy empty head to mumble over before the people, and spend a little time with them in the church. But O it is a miserable preaching where the preacher can say, Thus say I to you, but no more; and cannot say, Thus saith the Lord.

(2) Consider thy own insufficiency and weakness, together with the weight of the work. Who is sufficient for these things? which if thou do, thou wilt not dare study without prayer, no yet pray without study, when God allows thee time for both. It is a weighty work to bring sinners in to Christ, to pluck the brands out of the fire. Hast thou not great need then to be serious with God before you preach?

(3) Consider that word, 'But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way' (Jeremiah 23:22). There is no doubt that preachers not standing in God's counsel this day, and not making men to hear God's words, is one great reason of the unsuccessfulness of the gospel. Now this way, to wit, prayer in

faith, is the most proper expedient for acquaintance with the counsel of God. Neglect it not then, O my soul, but be much in the duty.

Remember, that thou hast found much good of such a practice, and hast found much of the Lord's help both in studying and preaching, by so doing. For which cause thou allottest the Sabbath morning entirely to that exercise, and meditation, if thou canst get it done. Wherefore let this be thy work. And there are these things which thou wouldst specially mind to pray for with respect to this:

(1) That thou mayst have a word from the Lord to deliver unto them; that thou mayst not preach to them the product of thy own wisdom, and that which merely flows from thy reason; for this is poor heartless preaching.

(2) That thy soul may be affected with the case of the people to whom thou preachest. If that be wanting, it will be tongue preaching, but not heart preaching.

(3) That thy heart may be inflamed with zeal for the glory of thy Master; that out of love to God, and love to souls thy preaching may flow.

(4) That the Lord may preach it into thy own heart, both when thou studiest and deliverest it. For if this be not, thou shalt be like one that feeds others, but starves himself for hunger; or like a way mark, that shows the way to men, but never moves a foot itself.

(5) That thou mayst be helped to deliver it with a suitable frame, thy heart being affected with what thou speakest, faithfully, keeping up nothing that the Lord gives thee, and without confusion of mind, or fear of man.

(6) That thou mayst have bodily strength allowed for the work, that thy indisposition disturb thee not.

(7) That God would countenance thee in the work with his presence and power in ordinances, to make the word spoken a convincing and converting word to them that are out of Christ; a healing word to the broken; confirming to the weak, doubting and staggering ones, etc.; that God himself would drive the fish into the net, when thou spreadest it out. In a word, that thou mayst be helped to approve thyself to God, as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

After preaching, Christ was taken up in this work. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray (Mark 6:46, Matthew 14:23). Follow Christ in this, O my soul.

It is better to do this, than go away with the great people in the afternoon, which I shun as much as I can; and when at any time I do it, it is a kind of torment to me; which I have shunned, and do resolve to shun more; and if at any time I be necessitated to go, that I shall spend more time alone through grace.

Pray to God, O my soul, that thy labors be not unsuccessful; that what thou hast delivered may not be as water spilt on the ground.

Pray for pardon of thy failings in public duties; and that God may accept of thy mite which thou givest with a willing mind; that he would not withdraw his blessing because of thy failings; but that he would be pleased to water with the dew of heaven the ground wherein thou didst sow the seed,

that it may spring up in due time; that the word preached may be as a nail fastened by the Master of assemblies, so as the devil may not be able to draw it out.

Think not, O my soul, that thy work is over, and thou hast no more to do when the people are dismissed. No, no; it is not so. Think with thyself, that the devil was as busy as thou wast, when thou wast preaching; and that afterwards he is not idle. And shall he be working to undo thy work, and thou unconcerned to hold it together? O no, it must not be so; God will not be pleased with this. And alas! I have been too slack in this point before this: Lord, help me to amend.

If a man had a servant that would go out and sow his seed very diligently and faithfully; but would come in, and sit down idle when it is sown, and forget to harrow it and hide it with the earth; would the master be well pleased with him? Yea, would he not be highly displeased, because the fowls would come and pick it up? So, O my soul, if thou shouldst be never so much concerned to get good seed, and never so faithful and diligent in sowing it; yet if after thou turn careless and take not the way to cover it, by serious seeking to the Lord that he may keep it in the hearts of people and make it to prosper, the devil may pick it all up; and where is thy labor then; and how will the Lord be pleased with thee! Therefore pray more frequently, cry more fervently to God, when the public work is over, than thou hast done; and endeavor to be as much concerned when it is over, as when thou wast going to it.

I do not doubt, but many times, when thou preachest, some get checks and convictions of guilt; some perhaps are strengthened; but both impressions wear off very soon. I fear thou must confess, and take with a sinful hand in this, in that thou dost not enough labor to get the seed covered when it is sown, and the nail driven farther in when it is entered.

Though many times thy body is wearied after the public work, yet sure thou mayst do more than thou dost; and if thy soul were more deeply affected, the weariness of body would not be so much in thy mind; but thou wouldst trample on it, that thou might get good done by the work, and souls might not always thus be robbed by that greedy vulture and roaring lion, the enemy of thy own salvation, and the salvation of others. Although he has been as busy to do harm all the day to souls as thou hast been to do good, yet he will not complain of weariness at night.

Take courage then, O my soul, and be strong in the Lord; and do not give it over to this enemy; endeavor to hold him at the staff's end. Thou hast a good second; Christ is concerned for his own seed as well as thou. Go on then, and be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and let that ravenous fowl never get a grain away as long as thou canst get it keep from him.

Thus then, O my soul, follow Christ, in being taken up in this so necessary an exercise. Thy Lord and Master had no wants to get made up, there was no fear of his failing in this work of the gospel; yet he prayed. to give all, and especially preachers of his word, an example. Lay not aside the pattern then, but write after his copy even in this.

Sixth, Christ contemned the world. He slighted it as not meet for any of his followers. He became poor, that we might become rich (Matthew 8:20). He gave himself entirely, at least after his inauguration, to matters that concerned the calling he had to the work of the gospel (John 9:4). All, especially preachers, are to follow Christ in the contempt of the world.

Yet we must beware of imitating him in those things which we are not commanded to follow, as voluntary poverty, this being a part of his satisfaction for the sins of the elect. Neither doth this exempt the preachers of the gospel from a lawful provision of things necessary for themselves, or others they are concerned in; for the apostle tells us, that he is worse than an infidel who doth not provide for his family (1 Timothy 5:8), were churchmen are not excepted.

Yea, it is clear that the ministers of the gospel may sometimes work with their hands for their maintenance, either when the iniquity of the times wherein they live does not allow them what may be for their maintenance, or when the taking of it will hinder the propagation of the gospel, as is clear by the practice of the apostle Paul. So that that in which, with respect to this, thou art to follow Christ, O my soul, is that thou do not needlessly involve thyself in worldly matters, to the hindrance of the duties of thy calling and station. As thou art a preacher of the gospel, other things must cede and give place to that. This is that which our Lord teaches us: Follow thou me; and let the dead bury their dead (Matthew 8:22); and the apostle: No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:4). Which was a thing not observed by some, especially our bishops, who acted as magistrates, as well as ministers; a thing which our Lord absolutely refused; Who made me a judge or a ruler? says he; yet digested by them, being an infallible sign of their ignorance of the weight of that work. And in my opinion it is not observed either by some ministers now-a-days, who when they have their glebes and stipends sufficient for their maintenance, do notwithstanding take more land a-farming. For my part, I see not how such can be said not to entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, and go beyond what doth become them as ministers of the gospel. Neither of these are my temptation now, being a probationer. But seeing I am unsettled, a corrupt heart and a subtle devil may take advantage of me, if I be not wary, and by their arguments from my present state may cast me off my feet, if I take not heed.

Therefore, O my soul, beware of preaching smoothly upon the account of getting a call from any parish. Have a care, that the want of that, viz., a call, do not put thee upon men pleasing. No, no; that must not be thy business. Remember, God provides for thee even now liberally, as he sees fit. Thou dost not want even so much of the world as is very necessary; and he that has provided for thee hitherto, yea, took thee, and kept thee from the womb, will not forsake thee as long as thou dost not forsake him, but remaineth faithful. Remember, God hath set the bounds of thy habitation, and determined the time. Though men and devils should oppose it, they shall not be able to hinder it. It is God himself that sets the solitary in families; and why shouldst thou go out of God's way to procure such a thing to thyself, or to antedate the time which is appointed of God? Go on in faithfulness, fear not; God can make, yea will make a man's enemies to be his friends, when his ways please the Lord. And though their corruptions disapprove of thy doctrine, and thyself for it, yet their consciences may be made to approve it, and God may bind them up, that they shall not appear against thee. And what though thou shouldst never be settled in any charge at all? Christ and his apostles were itinerants. If the Lord see it fit, why shouldst thou be against it? If the Lord have something to do with thee in diverse corners of his vineyard, calling thee sometimes to one place, sometimes to another, thou art not to quarrel that. Perhaps thou mayest do more good that way than otherwise.

If thou hadst been settled at home, then some souls here, which perhaps have got good of thy preaching, would have been deprived of it at least as from thee; and God will always give thee meat as long as he gives thee work; and go where thou wilt, thou canst not go out of thy Father's

ground.

Further, if thou shouldst take that way, and transgress for a piece of bread, thou mayst come short of thy expectation for all that, and lose both the world and a good conscience. But suppose thou shouldst by that means gain a call and a good stipend, thou losest a good conscience, which is a continual feast. For how can such a practice be excused from simony, seeing it is munus a lingua; and it is a certain symptom that a preacher seeks not them, but theirs; and so thou gettest it, and the curse of God with it. No; Lord, in thy strength, I resolve never to buy ease and wealth at such a dear rate.

Beware, O my soul, that thou close with no call upon the account of stipend. Lay that by when thou considerest the matter. See what clearness thou canst get from the Lord, when any call may be given thee, and walk according to his mind, and the mind of the church. Woe is me if a stipend should be that which should engage me to a place. I would shew myself a wretched creature.

Consider matters then abstracting from that. For surely, this is direct simony; selling the gift of God for money. Let their money perish with themselves that will adventure to do so. Such are buyers and sellers, that God will put out of his temple. Such are mere hirelings, working for wages; and too much of Balaam's temper is to be found there. That will provoke God to curse your blessings, and to send a moth among that which thou mayst get; and it surely will provoke God to send leanness to thy soul, as he did with the Israelites in the wilderness, when he gave them what they were seeking.

Thou canst not expect God's blessing on thy labors, but rather that thou shouldst be a plague to a people whom you so join with. In a word, thou wouldst go in the wrong way, and be discountenanced of God, when you have undertaken the charge.

There is yet a third case wherein this contempt of slighting of the world should appear in one sent to preach the gospel; that is, when a man is settled, and has encouragement or stipend coming in to him, and so must needs have worldly business done, especially if he be not single, whereby he is involved in more trouble thereabouts, than any in my circumstances for the time are. In such a case a minister would endeavor to meddle as little as he can with these things, but shun them as much as lies in him, especially if he have any to whom he can well trust the management of his affairs. For surely the making of bargains or pursuing them are not the fit object of a minister's employment. Not that I mean simply a man may not do that, and yet be a fisher of men; but that many times the man that takes such trouble in the things of the world to catch them, indisposes himself for the art of man-fishing. But this not being my case, I pass it, referring any rules in this case how to walk till the Lord be pleased so to tryst me, if ever. Only do thou, O my soul, follow Christ in the contempt of the world. Do not regard it. Thou mayst use it as a staff in thine hand, but not as a burden on thy back, otherwise the care of souls will not be much in thy heart. And to help thee to this contempt of the world, consider the vanity of the world. Solomon knew well what it was to have abundance, yet he calls all vanity of vanities, all is but vanity. The world is a very empty thing, it cannot comfort the soul under distress. No; the body it can do not good to when sore diseases do afflict it. The world cannot profit a man in the day of wrath. When God arises to plead with a person, his riches avail nothing. When he lies down on a deathbed, they can give him no comfort, though all his coffers were full. When he stands before the tribunal of God, they profit him nothing. Why then should such a useless and vain thing be esteemed?

Consider that the love of the world, where it predominates, is a sign of want of love to God: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Yea, even in a gracious soul, in so far as the love of the world sways the heart, in so far doth the love of God decay. They are as the scales of the balance, as the one goes up, the other goes down.

Consider the uncertainty of worldly things. They are as a bird that takes the wings of the morning, and flees away. Set not thy heart then on that which is not. How many and various changes as to the outward state are in a man's life. The beggar may well say, Hodie mihi, cras tibi [Today for me, tomorrow for you]. Men sometimes vile are exalted, honorable men are depressed; and the world is indeed volubilis rota; that part which is now up, shall ere long be down. Seest thou not that there is no constancy to be observed in the world, save a constant inconstancy! All things go on in a constant course of vicissitude. Nebuchadnezzar in one hour is walking with an uplifted heart in his palace, saying, Is not this great Babylon that I have built, etc.? and the next driven from men, and made to eat grass as an ox. Herod in great pomp makes an oration, the people cry out, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man, and he is immediately eaten up of worms. The rich man today fares sumptuously on earth, and tomorrow cannot get a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Consider the danger that people are in by worldly things, when they have more than daily bread. The rich man in Luke 12 felt this to be a stumbling block on which he broke his neck. The young man in the gospel, for love of what he had of the world, parted with Christ, heaven and glory, and so made a sad exchange. Prosperity in the world is a dangerous thing; it is that which destroys fools (Proverbs 1:32). When Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked against God, and forgat the Lord that fed him (Deuteronomy 32:15). It was better for David when he was on the one side of the hill, and his enemies on the other, and so in great danger, than when he was walking at ease on his house-top, when he espied Bathsheba. And of this, O my soul, thou hast had the experience. Our Lord tells us, that it is very hard for a rich man to be saved; and teaches us that it is hard to have riches and not set the heart on them. What care and toil do men take to themselves to get them! What anxiety are they exercised with, and how do they torment themselves to keep them! And when they are got and kept, all is not operae pretium [worth while] to them. Many by riches and honor, etc., have lost their bodies, and more have lost their souls. It exposes men to be the object of others, as Naboth was even for his vineyard; and who can stand before envy? (Proverbs 27:4; See also 1 Timothy 6:9-10). This ruined Naboth (1 Kings 21:1-29) Daebolum Belisario, quem virtus extulit, invidia depressit. So that he that handles the world, can very hardly come away with clean fingers. It is a snake in the bosom that, if God prevent it not by his grace, may sting thy soul to death.

Remember the shortness and the uncertainty of thy time. Thou art a tenant at will, and knowest not how soon thou mayst remove; and thou canst carry nothing with thee. Therefore having food and raiment (which the Lord does not let thee want), be therewith content (1 Timothy 6:7-8). Thou art a stranger in this earth, going home to thy Father's house, where there will be no need of such things as the world affords. Why shouldst thou then, O my soul, desire any more than will carry thee to thy journey's end? Art thou going to set up thy tent on this side of Jordan to dwell here? Art thou saying, It is good for me to be here? Art thou so well entertained abroad, that thou desirest not to go home? No, no. Well then, O my soul, gird up the loins of thy mind. Thou art making homeward, and thy Father bids thee run and make haste: go then, and take no burden on thy back; lest it make thee halt by the way, and the doors be shut ere thou reachest home, and so

thou lie without through the long night of eternity. And to shut up all, remember that there are other things for thee to set thy affections on than the things of this world. There are things above that merit thy affections. Where is Christ, heaven and glory, when thou lookest upon the world, highly esteeming it? Seest thou no beauty in it to ravish thy heart? Surely the more thou seest in him, the less thou wilt see in the world. And hath not experience confirmed this to thee? Alas, when the beauty of the upper house is in my offer, that ever I should have any kindness for the world, that vile dwarf and monster, that shall at the last be seen by me all in a fire. Sursum cor [Lift up your heart], O my soul! thou lookest too low. Behold the King in his glory; look to him that died for thee, to save thee from this present evil world. See him sitting at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. Behold the crown in his hand to give thee, when thou hast overcome the world. Behold the recompense of reward bought to thee with his precious blood, if thou overcome.

Ah! art thou looking after toys, and going off thy way to gather the stones of the brook, when thou art running for a crown of gold, yea more than the finest gold? Does this become a man in his right wits? Yea, does it not rather argue madness, and a more than brutish stupidity? The brutes look down, but men are to look up. They have a soul capable of higher things than what the world affords: therefore,

Pronaque cum spectent animalia caetera terram,

Os homini sublime dedit, caelumque tueri

Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus. Be then of a more noble spirit than the earthworms. Let the swine feed on husks. Be thou of a more sublime spirit: trample on those things that are below. Art thou clothed with the sun? Get the moon under thy feet then; despise it, look not on it with love, turn from it, and pass away.

Let it not move thee if thou be poor, Christ had not where to lay his head.

Let not the prospect of future troublesome times make thee solicitous how to be carried through; for ’thou shalt not be ashamed in the evil days, and in the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied’. God hath said it (Psalms 37:19), therefore do thou believe it. Be not anxious about thy provision for old age, for by all appearance thou wilt never see it. It is more than probable thou wilt be sooner at thy journey’s end. The body is weak; it is even stepping down to salute corruption as its mother, ere it has well entered the hall of the world; thy tabernacle pins seem to be drawing out by little and little already. Courage then, O my soul; ere long the devil, and the world, and the flesh shall be bruised under thy feet; and thou shalt be received into eternal mansions. But though the Lord should lengthen out thy days to old age, he that brought thee into life will not forsake thee then either. If he give thee life, he will give thee meat. Keep a loose hold of the world then; contemn it if thou wouldst be a fisher of men.

Seventh, Christ was useful to souls in his private converse, taking occasion to instruct, rebuke, etc., from such things as offered. Thus he dealt with this woman of Samaria. He took occasion from the water she was drawing to tell her of the living water, etc. Thus being at a feast, he rebuked the Pharisees that chose the uppermost seats, instructing them in the right way of behavior at feasts.

O my soul, follow Christ in this. Be edifying in your private converse. When you are at any time in company, let something that smells of heaven drop from your lips. Where any are faulty, reprove them as prudently as you can. If they appear to be ignorant, instruct them when need requires, etc. And learn that heavenly chemistry of extracting some spiritual thing out of earthly things. To this purpose and for this end endeavor after a heavenly frame, which will, as is storied of the philosopher's stone, turn every metal into gold. When the soul is heavenly, it will even scrape jewels out of a dunghill. Whatever the discourse is, it will afford some useful thing or another.

Alas, my soul, that you follow this example so little! O what a shame is it for you to sit down in company, and rise again, and part with them, and never a word of Christ to be heard where you are. Be ashamed of this, and remember what Christ says, "Whoever shall confess me before men, him I will confess also before my Father--but whoever shall deny me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

How many times have you been somewhat exact in your conversation when alone, but when in company, by the neglect of this duty, especially of rebuking, you have come away with loss and a troubled mind, because of your faint-heartedness this way? Amend in this and make your converse more edifying, and take courage to reprove, exhort, etc. You know not what a seasonable admonition may do--the Lord may be pleased to back it with life and power.

Eighth, Christ laid hold upon opportunities of public preaching when they offered, as is clear from the whole history of the gospel. He gave a pattern to ministers to be instant in season and out of season. O my soul, follow Christ in this. Do not refuse any occasion of preaching when God calls you to it. It is very unlike Christ's practice for preachers of the gospel to be lazy, to slight the opportunities of doing good to a people when the Lord puts opportunities in their hand. For this end consider:

(1) Besides Christ's example, that you are worth nothing in the world insofar as you are lazy; what good do we serve if we are not serviceable for God?

(2) It may provoke God to take away your talent and give it to another if you are not active. Whatever talent the Lord has given you, it must be employed in his service. He did not give it to you to hide it in a napkin. Remember what became of the unprofitable servant that hid his Lord's money.

(3) You know not when your Master will come. And blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing. If Christ should come and find you idle, when he is calling you to work, how will you be able to look him in the face? They are well that die at Christ's work.

Chapter 44

05.00. THE BEAUTIES OF THOMAS BOSTON

THE BEAUTIES OF

THOMAS BOSTON A selection of his writings

SCRIPTURE 1 The nature of that faith and obedience which the holy Scriptures teach...

2 The manner of discovering the true sense of Holy Scriptures...

3 Reason, not the supreme judge of controversies in religion...

4 To search and study the Scriptures is the duty of all classes of men...

5 Several things of great importance pre-supposed in these words, Isaiah 34:16, "seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read," etc...

6 Weighty reasons for diligently reading and searching the Book of God...

7 Earnest exhortations and powerful motives to read and search the Book of God...

8 Useful direction for reading and searching the Scriptures...

PRAYER 9 Explanation of what it is to pray in the name of Jesus...

10 By what means believers pray in a manner acceptable to God...

11 What classes of men we are to pray for...

12 For what, and how, we are to pray...

13 The Necessity of secret prayer...

14 Important questions concerning secret prayer stated and answered...

15 Motives to secret prayer, with answers to objections commonly made to the performance of this duty...

16 The Only rule which God hath given to direct His people in their prayers to Him...

GOD 17 Directions to aid us in forming right notions of God as a spirit, infinitely pure and perfect...

18 In what God’s attribute of Wisdom is gloriously displayed...

19 In what God’s attribute of power is gloriously displayed...

20 In what God’s glorious attribute of holiness is manifested...

21 In what God’s awful attribute of justice is manifested...

22 Plausible objections to the justice of God stated and answered...

23 Important lessons from the justice of God...

24 In what the wondrous goodness of God is manifested...

25 In what God’s glorious attribute of truth is manifested...

26 There is, and can be, but one God...

27 The awful and destructive nature of atheism...

28 Directions how to guard against atheism...

29 Clear evidence of the Godhead subsisting in three persons...

30 How the three persons of the Godhead are distinguished...

31 Clear evidence of the three persons of the Godhead being one God...

32 The great importance of the doctrine of the holy Trinity... THE PUBLIC ORDINANCES 33 Interesting explanation of Acts 10:33...

34 Reasons why we should be careful to attend the public ordinances... In what respects we are before the Lord at public ordinances...

GOD’S DECREES 35 The chief end of God’s decrees explained...

36 The properties of God’s decrees explained...

Objections to God’s decrees stated and answered...

37 Important lessons drawn from the decrees of God...

GOD THE CREATOR 38 Ephesians 1:3,4,5, explained...

What sinners of mankind are chosen to... The glorious properties of God’s election of sinners... By whom God’s chosen are redeemed and saved...

Useful lessons from the doctrine of God’s election... THE COVENANT OF WORKS Genesis 2:17 explained...

Evidence of a covenant of works between God and the first man Adam... In the covenant of works, Adam was constituted a public person, and the representative of all his posterity... The justice and equity of Adam’s representation in the covenant of works... The nature of the obedience to which man is obliged by the covenant of works... The difference between Adam’s and the believer’s heaven... THE FALL OF MAN How man’s nature is wholly corrupted, and how man in his first sin trangressed the whole law...

Man’s natural state, a matter of deep lamentation... The necessity of having a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature... The reasons why God was pleased to deal with man in the way of a covenant...

Consideration of what our first parents fell from, and of what they fell into... A full explanation of the way by which the lamentable fall of our first parents happened...

Useful lessons from the doctrine of the fall... An affecting view of that in which the evil of sin doth lie...

How Adam’s first sin comes to be imputed to all his posterity...

Psalm 51:5 explained...

Original sin proved, in what this sin consists, and how far it extends...

Useful lessons from the doctrine of original sin... The dreadful misery into which all mankind are brought by Adam’s fall...

Useful lessons from the awful doctrine of man’s misery in his fallen state... A full answer to the question: who among men are still under the broken covenant of works, or still under the curse of the broken law?...

Reasons why many in a Christian land still remain under the broken covenant of works... An affecting view of the awful consequences of a sinner’s dying under the curse of the broken law... THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED A view of the wicked rising from the grave under the curse... The wicked, under the curse, appearing at the judgment seat of Christ... An affecting view of sinners lying for ever in hell, under the curse of the broken law... THE COVENANT OF GRACE 39 The Covenant of Grace, the grand foundation of all saving mercy to lost sinners of Adam’s race...

Instructions deduced from the consideration of saving mercy exhibited in the covenant of grace...

How Christ the Son of God became the second Adam, and how the covenant of grace was made with Him as the second Adam... For what, Christ, in the covenant of grace, became surety to God for His people... The absolute necessity of Christ priesthood...

Christ’s fulfilling all righteousness, as the Surety and Representative of His people, is the grand and only condition of the covenant of grace...

Several things of awful import, agreed to between the Father and the Son in the covenant of grace...

Instructive lessons from the consideration of the singular condition of the covenant of grace... The true character of those who are personally and savingly interested by faith in the covenant of grace...

Promises peculiar to Christ in the covenant of grace...

Promises of the covenant of grace to God’s elect while yet in their state of rebellion against Him:

(1) the promise of preservation...

(2) the promise of the Spirit...

Promises of the covenant of grace to God’s elect, form the time of actually embracing Christ till death:

(1) the promise of justification...

(2) the promise of a new and saving covenant-relation to God...

(3) the promise of sanctification...

(4) the promise of perseverance in grace...

(5) the promise of temporal benefits...

Promises of the covenant of grace to God’s elect, from the period of their death, through the ages of eternity:

(1) the promise of victory over death...

(2) the promise of everlasting life in heaven...

Sinners of mankind the object of the administration of the covenant of grace...

40 Christ as a Prophet administers the covenant of grace... The chief acts of Christ administering the covenant of grace as a King...

Discovery of the means by which sinners embrace the covenant of grace... The faith of the law necessary to our entering into the covenant of grace... The faith of the gospel necessary to our entering into the covenant of grace--this faith fully explained, and objections satisfactorily answered...

(1) the faith of Christ’s sufficiency...

(2) the faith of the gospel offer...

(3) the faith of our right to Christ...

(4) the faith of particular trust for salvation...

Chapter 45

05.01. THE NATURE OF THAT FAITH AND OBEDIENCE WHWICH THE HOLY SCRIPTURE TEACHES

THE NATURE OF THAT

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

WHICH THE HOLY SCRIPTURES TEACHES

First, As to faith. Divine faith is a believing of what God has revealed, because God has said it, or revealed it. People may believe scripture truths, but not with a divine faith, unless they believe it on that very ground, the authority of God speaking in his word. And this divine faith is the product of the Spirit of God in the heart of the sinner, implanting the habit or principle of faith there, and exciting it to a hearty reception and firm belief of whatever God reveals in his word. And the faith which the scripture teaches is what a man is to believe concerning God. This may be reduced to four heads: What God is; the persons in the Godhead; the decrees of God relating to everything that comes to pass; and the execution of them in his works of creation and providence. Now, though the works of creation and providence show that there is a God, yet that fundamental truth, that God is, and the doctrines relating to the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence, God’s acts and purposes, the creation of all things, the state of man at his creation, his fall, and his recovery by the mediation and satisfaction of Christ are only to be learned from the holy scriptures. Hence we infer,

1. That there can be no right knowledge of God acquired in an ordinary way without the scriptures, Matthew 22:29. "ye do err" said Christ to the Sadducees, "not knowing the scriptures." As there must be a dark night where the light is gone, so those places of the earth must needs be dark, and without the saving knowledge of God, that want the scriptures. Thus the Apostle tells the Ephesians, that, before they were visited with the light of the gospel, they were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12.

2. That where the scriptures are not known, there can be no saving faith. For, says the Apostle, Romans 10:14-15, Romans 10:17. "How shall they call on him 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, except they be sent ? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things ! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

3. That there is nothing we are bound to believe as a part of faith but what the scripture teaches, be who they propose it, and whatever they may pretend for their warrant. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah 8:20. No man must be our master in these things: "For one is our master even Christ," Matthew 23:10. He is Lord of faith, and we are bound to believe whatever he has revealed in his word.

Secondly, As to obedience, it is that duty which God requires of man. It is that duty and obedience which man owes to God, to his will and laws in respect of God’s universal supremacy and sovereign authority over man; and which he should render to him out of love and gratitude. The scriptures are the holy oracle from whence we are to learn our duty, Psalms 19:11. "By them is thy servant warned," says David. The bible is the light we are to take heed to, that we may know how to steer our course, and order the several steps of our life. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path," says the Psalmist, Psalms 119:105. From whence we may infer,

1. That there can be no sufficient knowledge of the duty which we owe to God without the scriptures. Though the light of nature does in some measure show our duty to God, yet it is too dim to take up the will of God sufficiently in order to salvation.

2. That there can be no right obedience yielded to God without them. Men that walk in the dark must stumble; and the works that are wrought in the dark will never abide the light; for there is no working rightly by guess in this matter. All proper obedience to God must be learned from the scriptures.

3. That there is no point of duty that we are called to, but what the scripture teaches, Isaiah 8:20, forecited. Men must neither make duties to themselves or others, but what God has made duty. The law of God is exceeding broad, and reaches the whole conversation of man, outward and inward, Psal.19. and man is bound to conform himself to it alone as the rule of his life.

Thirdly, As to the connection of these two: faith and obedience are joined together, because there is no true faith but what is followed with obedience, and no true obedience but what flows from faith. Faith is the loadstone of obedience, and obedience the touchstone of faith, as appears from Jam.2. They that want faith cannot be holy; and they that have true faith, their faith will work by love. Hence we may see,

1. That faith is the foundation of duty or obedience, and not obedience or duty the foundation of faith, Titus 3:8 "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might br careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men;" and that the things to be believed are placed before the things to be practiced, in order to distinguish between the order of things in the covenant of grace, and what they were under the covenant of works. Under the latter, doing, or perfect obedience to the law, was the foundation of the promised privilege of life; but under the former, the promise is to be believed, and the promised life is to be freely received: and thereupon follows the believer’s obedience to the law, out of gratitude and love for the mercy received. This appears from the order laid down by God himself in delivering the moral law from mount Sinai. He lays the foundation of faith, first of all, in these words, "I am the Lord thy God," &c. which is the sum and substance of the covenant of grace; and then follows the law of the ten commandments, which is as it were grafted upon this declaration of sovereign grace and love, Exodus 20:2-18. And let it be remembered, that the Apostle Paul calls gospel-obedience the obedience of faith, as springing from and founded upon faith. And if we examine the order of doctrine laid down in all his epistles, we shall find, that he first propounds the doctrine of faith, or what man is to believe, and upon that foundation inculcates the duties that are to be practiced.

2. That all works without faith are dead, and so cannot please God. For whatever is not of faith is sin; and without or separate from Christ we can do nothing. Faith is principle of all holy and acceptable obedience.

3. That those who inculcate moral duties without discovering the necessity of regeneration, and union with Christ, as the source of all true obedience, are foolish builders; they lay their foundation on the sand, and the superstructure they raise will soon be overturned; and they prevert the gospel of Christ. Such would do well to consider what the Apostle says, Galatians 1:9 "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

05.02. THE MANNER OF DISCOVERING THE TRUE SENSE OF HOLY SCRIPTURES

THE MANNER OF DISCOVERING

THE TRUE SENSE OF

HOLY SCRIPTURES

1. The sense of scripture is but one, and not manifold. There may be several parts of that one sense subordinate to another; as some prophecies have a respect to the deliverance from Babylon, the spiritual by Christ, and the eternal in heaven; and some passages have one thing that is typical of another: yet these are but one full sense, only that may be of two sorts; one is simple, another compound. Some scriptures have only a simple sense, containing a declaration of one thing only; and that is either proper or figurative. A proper sense is that which arises from the words taken properly, and the figurative from the words taken figuratively. Some have a simple proper sense, as, "God is a Spirit, God created the heavens and the earth;" which are to be understood according to the propriety of the words. Some have a simple figurative sense, as, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away," &c. Thus you see what the simple sense is. The compound or mixed sense is found wherein one thing is held forth as a type of the other; and so it consists of two parts, the one respecting the type, the other the antitype; which are not two senses, but two parts of the one and entire sense intended by the Holy Ghost: e.g. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to it and be healed. The full sense of which is, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that, &c. even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here is a literal and mystical sense, which make up one full sense betwixt them. Those scriptures that have this compound sense are sometimes fulfilled properly (or literally, as it is taken in opposition to figuratively) in the type and antitype both; as Hosea 11:1. "I have called my son out of Egypt," which was literally true both to Israel and Christ. Sometimes figuratively in the type, and properly in the antitype, as Psalms 69:21. "They gave me vinegar to drink." Sometimes properly in the type, and figuratively in the antitype, as Psalms 2:9. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." Compare 2 Samuel 12:31. Sometimes figuratively in both, as Psalms 41:9. "Yea, mine own familiar friend - hath lifted up his heel against me; which is meant of Ahithophel and Judas. Now the sense of the scripture must be but one, and not manifold, that is, quite different and no wise subordinate one to another, because of the unity of truth and because of the perspicuity of the scripture.

2. Where there is a question about the true sense of scripture, it must be found out what it is by searching other places that speak more clearly, the scripture itself being the infallible rule of interpreting of scripture. Now that it is so, appears from the following arguments.

(1.) The Holy Spirit gives this as a rule, 2 Peter 1:20-21. After the apostle had called the Christians to take heed to the scriptures, he gives them this rule for understanding it, "Knowing this first, that

no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation of our own exposition. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." As it came, so is it to be expounded: but it came not by the will of man; therefore we are not to rest on men for the sense of it, but holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and so never erring; therefore we are to look to the dictates of the same spirit in other places.

(2.) There are several approved example of this, comparing one scripture with another, to find out the meaning of the Holy Ghost, as Acts 15:15. "And to this agree the words of the prophet," &c. The Bereans are commended for this, Acts 17:11. Yea, Christ himself makes use of this to show the true sense of the scriptures against the devil, Matthew 4:6. "Cast thyself down," said that wicked spirit; "for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee," &c. Matthew 4:7. "It is written again," says Christ, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." and thus our Lord makes out the true sense of that scripture, that it is to be understood only with respect to them who do not cast themselves on a tempting of God.

05.03. REASON NOT THE SUPREME JUDGE OF CONTROVERSIES IN RELIGION

REASON

NOT THE SUPREME JUDGE OF

CONTROVERSIES IN RELIGION

1. Reason in an unregenerate man is blind in the matters of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" Ephesians 4:17-18; Ephesians 5:8. Except. This only respects reason not illustrated by divine revelation. Answer. By that illustration of reason by divine revelation, they understand either subjective or objective illustration. If they understand it of subjective illustration, they quit that article of their religion, wherein they believe that the mind of man is capable of itself, without the illumination of the Spirit, to attain sufficient knowledge of the mind of God revealed in the Scripture. If of objective illustration, by the mere revelation of these truths, then it is false that they assert: For the apostle opposes here the natural man to the spiritual man; and therefore by the natural man is understood every unregenerate man, even that has these truths revealed to him; for, says the apostle, "they are foolishness unto him." Now , how can he judge them foolishness if they be not revealed?

2. Reason is not infallible, and therefore cannot be admitted judge in matters concerning the souls. Reason may be deceived, Romans 3:4, and is not this to shake the foundations of religion, and to pave a way to sceptisism and atheism? Except. That is not to be feared where sound reason is admitted judge. But what talk they of sound reason? The adversaries themselves will yield, that reason is unsound in the most part of men. We say, that it is not fully sound in the in the world; for even the best know but in part; darkness remains in some measure on the minds of all men.

3. Reason must be subject to the scripture, and submit itself to be judged by God speaking there, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. "The weapons of our warfare are-- mighty-- to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations,-- and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Matters of faith are above the sphere of reason; and therefore as sense is not admitted judge in those things that are above it, so neither reason in those things that are above it, 1 Timothy 3:16. "And without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness: God was in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

If reason were the supreme judge of controversies, then our faith should be built on ourselves, and the great reason why we believe any principle of religion would be, because it appears so and so to us, which is most absurd. The scripture teaches otherwise, 1 Thessalonians 2:13. "Ye received it not as the word of me, but as ti is in truth the word of God." Most plainly does our Lord teach this, John 5:34. "I receive not testimony from men;" John 5:39 "Search the scriptures." The orthodox

assert the supreme judge of controversies in religion to be the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures. This is proved by the following arguments.

1. In the Old and New Testament, the Lord still sends us to this judge. So that we neither turn to the right hand nor left from what he there speaks, Deuteronomy 5:32. and Deuteronomy 17:11. "According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee;" Isaiah 8:20. "To the law and to the testimony," &c...; Luke 16:29. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;" John 5:39. Search the scriptures." Some hereto refer that passage, Matthew 19:28. "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In this sense it must be meant of the doctrine they taught, as dictated to them by the Holy Ghost.

2. It was the practice of Christ and his apostle to appeal to the Spirit speaking in the scriptures, Matthew 4:1-25 where Christ still answers Satan with that, "It is written." And so while discoursing with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Matthew 22:31-32.; 2 Peter 1:19.; Acts 15:15-16. A careful examination of which passages I recommend to you for your establishment in the truth.

3. To the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, and to him only, agree those things that are requisite to constitute one the supreme judge. (1.) We may certainly know that the sentence which he pronounces is true, for he is infallible, being God. (2.) We cannot appeal from him, for he is one above whom there is none. (3.) He is no respecter of persons, nor can be biassed in favour of one in preference to another.

Chapter 48

05.04. TO SEARCH AND STUDY THE SCRIPTURES IS THE DUTY OF ALL CLASSES OF MEN

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If ye ask, by whom this is to done? It is by all into whose hands, by the mercy of God, it comes. Some never had it, and so they will not be condemned for slighting of it, Romans 2:12. Magistrates are called to look to iit, and be much conversant in it, Joshua 1:8. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observed to do according to all that is written therein." Deuteronomy 17:18-19. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his Kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priest the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statues, to do them." Ministers are in a special manner called to the study of it. 1 Timothy 4:13. "Give attendance to reading." 2 Timothy 3:16-17. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But not they only are so commended, but all others within the church, John 5:39. "Search the scriptures." Deuteronomy 6:6-7. "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them dilligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sitteth in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Chapter 49

05.05. SEVERAL THINGS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE PRE-SUPPOSED IN THESE WORDS...

SEVERAL THINGS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE

PRE-SUPPOSED IN THESE WORDS,

Isaiah 34:16. "SEEK YE OUT OF

THE BOOK OF THE LORD, AND READ,"

1. That man has lost his way, and needs direction to find it, Psalms 119:176. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant." Miserable man is bemisted in a vain world, which is a dark place, and has as much need of the scriptures to direct him, as one has of a light in dark, 2 Peter 1:9. What a miserable case is that part of the world in that wants the Bible? They are vain in their imaginations, and grope in the dark, but cannot find the way of salvation. In no better case are those to whom it has not come in power.

2. That man is in hazard of being led farther and farther wrong. This made the spouse say, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" There is a subtle devil, a wicked world, corrupt lusts within one’s own breast, to lead him out of the right way, that we had need to give over, and take this guide. There are many false lights in the world, which, if followed, will lead the traveller into a mire, and leave him there.

3. That men are slow of heart to understand the mind of God in his word. It will cost searching diligently ere we can take it up, John 5:39. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Our eyes are dim to the things of God, our apprehensions dull, and our judgment is weak. And therefore, because the iron is blunt, we must put too the more strength. We lost the sharpness of our sight in spiritual things in Adam; and our corrupt wills and carnal affections, that favour not the things of God, do more blind our judgments: and therefore it is a labour to us to find out what is necessary for our salvation.

4. That the book of the Lord has its difficulties, which are not to be easily solved. Therefore the Psalmist prays, "Open thou mine eyes. that I may see wondrous things out of thy law," Psalms 119:18. Philip asked the eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" There are depths there wherein an elephant may swim, and will exercise the largest capacities, with all the advantages they may be possessed of. God in his holy providence has so ordered it, to stain the pride of all glory; to make his word the liker himself, whom none can search out to perfection, and to sharpen the diligence of his people in their inquiries into it.

5. That yet we need highly to understand it, otherwise we would not be bidden search into it. "Of the times and seasons," says the apostle,. "ye have no need that I write unto you;" and therefore

he wrote not of them. There is a treasure in this field; we are called to dig for it; for though it be hid, yet we must have it, or we will pine away in our spiritual poverty.

6. That we may gain from it by diligent inquiry. The holy humble heart will not be always sent empty away from these wells of salvation, when it plies itself to draw. There are shallow places in these waters of the sanctuary. where lambs may wade.

Chapter 50

05.06. Weighty reasons for diligently reading and searching the Book of God

Weighty reasons for diligently reading

and searching the Book of God.

1. Because the way of salvation is to be found only therein, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.' This is the star risen in a dark world, to guide us where Christ is. All the researches of the wise men of the world, all the inventions of men, can never guide us to Emmanuel's land, John 1:18. 'No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Here, and here only, the counsels of God touching man's salvation are discovered. And so, as salvation is the most necessary thing, the study of the scriptures, is the most necessary exercise. slight it, is to judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life.

2. It Is the only rule of our faith and lives, 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,' Ephesians 2:20. 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' Revelation 22:18-19. "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' The Bible is the pattern shown on the mount, to which our faith and lives must be conformed, if we would please God. The Lord says to us, as Deuteronomy 28:14 'Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left.' None can walk regularly unless they observe the rule;, but how can one observe it unless he know it? Matthew 22:29. 'Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.' God has given each of us our post in the world: the Bible is the book of our instructions; and shall we not study it? The lawyer studies his law-books, the physician his medical books, and shall not a Christian study the book of the Lord?

3. The Lord himself dictated it, and gave it us for that very end, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, For correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Romans 5:4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' And has the Spirit of the Lord written it, and will not we read it? Has he given it us to be studied by us, and will we slight it ? This must be horrid contempt of God, and ingratitude to him, with a witness. Whose image and superscription is this on the scriptures? Is it not the Lord's? Then take it up and read.

4. We must be judged by the scriptures at the great day, John 12:48. 'He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' That is one of the books opened, Revelation 20:12. This is the book of

the Lord’s laws and ordinances, by which he will proceed in absolving or condemning us. I own God win go another way to work with those who never had the Bible. Romans 2:12. But know thou, that seeing it is in the country where then livest, though thou never readest a letter of it, thou must be judged by it. Is there not good reason then for reading the scriptures?

05.07. Earnest exhortations and powerful motives to read and search the Book of God.

Earnest exhortations and powerful motives to read and search the Book of God.

1. Let such as cannot read, learn to read. Ye that have children, as ye tender their immortal souls, cause them to learn to read the Bible. Remember therefore the vows taken upon you at their baptism, and the duty laid upon you by the Lord himself, Ephesians 6:4. 'Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' 2 Timothy 3:15. Timothy from a child knew the holy scriptures. Ye who got no learning when ye were young, labour to get it now. Alas! some parents or others that have had some when young with them, have been cruel to their souls, as the ostrich to her young. They have learned them to work, but have been at no pains to learn them to read: so have sent them out into the world a prey to the devourer's teeth, without the ordinary means of the knowledge of God. Thus they are destroyed with bloody ignorance. But will ye pity your own souls, though others did not that brought you up? And do not enter yourselves heirs to their sins, by being as negligent of yourselves as they were. Though perhaps thee left you nothing to live upon, yet for a livelihood ye have done for yourselves. And will you do nothing for your souls. Think not it will excuse thee at the hand of God, that thou art a servant; for thy soul is in as great danger as thy master's, and ignorance of religion will destroy it, Isaiah 28:11. There are few but know how to improve the scarcity of servants to the raising of the fee; but will you improve it by getting it in your condition to learn to read, and seek out such families where you may have that advantage, for some such there are, like Abraham's, Genesis 18:10. Nay, rather than not do it, give over service for a time, and learn. Neither will it excuse you that now you have a family; for you have an immortal soul still, which gross ignorance of the mind of God in the scriptures will ruin eternally, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. 'In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the more need you have to read the scriptures, that you have a family, that you may know the Lord's mind yourself and teach it to your family. Such an excuse will no more screen you from everlasting destruction, than covering yourself with leaves will save you from the flames of a devouring fire. Say not you are too old now to learn. It is never out of time to learn to do well for your eternal salvation. If your eyes can serve you to learn, you ought to do it, whatever your age be. But if your sight be so far gone, that you cannot, though you were ever so willing, then tremble at the thoughts of the awful judgment of God that has taken away sight from you, that when you had it, would not use it for his glory, and the good of your own soul; and humble thyself, and apply to the blood of Christ, for this thy neglect, lest it prove ruining to thee for ever. And cause others to read to you, and beg the teaching of the Spirit, if so be such an old careless slighter of salvation may find mercy.

2. Let such as can read procure bibles. I dare say one that has a love to the bible (and that all who love the Lord have) will make many shifts ere they want one. But they must be lawful shifts: for stealing of bibles, or keeping them up from the owners, is like a thief stealing a rope to hang himself in. But spare it off your bellies or your backs, and procure one rather than want.

3. Let such as have bibles read them frequently, and acquaint themselves with the book of the Lord. Read them to your families morning and evening; and read them in secret by yourselves; it should be a piece of your duties in secret. Make the bible your companion abroad and at home, in the house and in the field. It is lamentable to think how unacquainted with the bible many are, and how little heart they have to it. Ballads and song-books get the place of the bible with many; and many have no use for it but once in the week, on the sabbath day, as if it were more for a show with them than the necessity of their souls.

4. Not only read it, but search into it, and study it, to know the mind of God therein, and that ye may do it. Be not superficial in your reading of the scriptures, but do it with application, painfulness, and diligence; using all means to read it with understanding; breaking through the surface that ye may come at the hid treasure therein. Reading as well as praying by rote is to little purpose; for a parcel of bare words Will neither please God, nor edify your souls. I shall now give some motives to enforce this important duty of reading the scriptures.

Mot. 1. God requires it of us; he commands us to do it, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' The Jews had once the scriptures committed to them; but did God design they should only have them in the temple? nay, in their houses also: Only laid up in the ark? nay he designed another chest for them, even their hearts, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, formerly cited. Let the authority of God sway you, then, and as you have any regard to it, study the scriptures.

Mot. 2. Nay, the very being of the bible among us is enough to move us to study it, seeing it is that by which we must stand or fall for ever. The proclaiming of the law publicly is sufficient to oblige the subjects; and they cannot plead ignorance, though they get not every one a copy of it. For every one ought to know the rule of his duty. And sinners will be condemned by it, if they conform not to it, whether they knew it or not, John 3:19. 'And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

Mot. 3. It is an exercise very pleasing to God, so that it be done in a right manner, namely, in faith. For thereby God speaks to us, and we hear and receive his words at his mouth; and obedient ears are his delight..

1. The Spirit of God commends it. It was the commendation of the Bereans, Acts 17:11. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so;' of Apollos, Acts 18:24; of Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:15. 'And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus'. And why does the Spirit of God commend others for this, but to recommend the scriptures to us?

2. There is a particular blessing annexed to this exercise, Revelation 1:3. 'Blessed is he that readeth.' And the children of God in all ages have sucked the sap of it, while they have had sweet fellowship with God in his word, and the influences of the Spirit, to the quickening, enlightening, fructifying, and comforting their souls.

Mot. 4. Consider what a great privilege it is, that we have the scriptures to read and study at this day. If Christ had not died for our salvation, the world had never been blessed with this glorious light, but had been in darkness here, as a pledge of eternal darkness. Let us compare our case with that of others, and see our privilege.

1. Look back to the case of the church in its first age before the flood, or the time of Moses, while they had not the written word. The will of God was revealed to some of them by visions, voices, dreams, &c.; but we may say, as 2 Peter 1:19.'We have a more sure word of prophecy.' But that was not the lot of all, but of a few among them; the rest behoved to learn by tradition. Now every one has alike access to the word of divine revelation.

2. Look to the case of the church under the Old Testament. In David's time there was little more than the five books of Moses written; yet how does that holy soul swell in commendation of his little bible, when little more than the ground-work of this glorious structure was laid! Psalms 119:1-176. Take that church at her best in this respect, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed, they saw not the light of the New. Now the whole canon of the Scripture is in our hands, this glorious image of God has got the finishing stroke; no more is to be added thereto for ever. The New Testament casts a light upon the types, shadows, and dark prophecies of the Old. And shall we not be sensible of our mercy ?

3. But look abroad into the Pagan world at this day, in comparison of which all that know any part of the scriptures are but few, and the bible is not heard of among them. That precious treasure is not opened to them to this day, and they can know no more of God but what they can learn from the dark glimmerings of nature's light. O may we not in some sort say, as Psalms 147:19-20. 'He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord."

4. Look back but a few years hence, when no bibles were but such as were manuscript, namely, before the art of printing was found out, which was but a little before the reformation from popery. How rare behoved they then to be ! and how dear, ye may easily perceive. But now how common and easy are they to be had?

5. Look to the case of those that lived, or yet live, under Popish tyranny, where it is a crime to have or read the bible without a special licenses. What a struggle had our reformers in this church, ere they could get allowance by the laws of the land to read the bible in English ? And how is the bible kept out of the people's hands to this day in Popish countries ? Whereas now ye are pressed to read and study it. A New Testament was very precious in those days of Popish persecution, when one gave a cart-load of hay for a leaf of the bible. But, alas ! as one says of the French Protestants, When they burned us for reading of the scriptures, we burned in zeal to be reading them; now with our liberty is bred also negligence and disesteem of God's word.

6. Consider the many helps there are to understand the scriptures beyond what there were formerly. Many have run to and fro, and knowledge that way has been increased, both by preaching and writing. And that useful exercise of lecturing, which our church has commanded to be of a large portion of scripture, is no small help. What will we be able to answer to the Lord, if this great privilege be slighted ?

Mot. 5. Consider it has been the way of the people of God, to be much addicted to and conversant in the scripture. So true is it that wisdom is justified of her children. O take heed ye go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and ye will not fill them in the way of slighting, but prizing of the word of God. Consider,

1. Ye shall find the saints highly prizing the word, Psalms 19:1-14 and Psalms 119:1-176 what large commendations of the word are there ! How sweet was it to Jeremiah! Jeremiah 15:16. 'Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' Peter, who heard the voice on the mount, yet prefers the scriptures to voices from heaven, 2 Peter 1:19. Paul speaks highly of it, 2 Timothy 3:16. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' The martyrs highly prized it, and ventured their lives for it. One cast away at sea, and swimming for his life on a mast, having five pounds, which was all his stock, in the one hand, and a bible in the other, and being obliged to let go one of them, kept the bible, and let the five pounds go.

2. Ye shall find them much addicted to the study of the word. It was David's companion and bosom oracle, Psalms 119:97. Daniel at Babylon searches the scriptures of the prophets, Daniel 9:2. So did the noble Bereans, Apollos, and Timothy.

3. Yea, the Spirit of God makes it the character of a godly man, Psalms 1:2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' O how rational is that! The man that is born of God has a natural desire after the word, as the child after the mother's breast, 1 Peter 2:2. The new nature tends to communion with God; it is by the word the soul has communion with him, for thereby God speaks to us. And therefore it is a sad sign, that there are few true Christians, while there are so few that diligently ply the word.

Mot. 6. Consider the Excellency of the scriptures. There is a transcendent glory in them, which whoso discern cannot miss to hug and embrace them. To commend the bible to you, I shall say these eight things of it.

1. It is the best of books. They may know much, ye think, that have many good books; but have ye the bible, and ye have the best book in the world. It is the book of the Lord, dictated by unerring, infinite wisdom. There is no dress here with the gold, no chaff with the corn. Every word of God is pure. There is nothing for our salvation to be had in other books, but what is learned from this. They are but the rivulets that run from this fountain, and all shine with light borrowed from hence. And it has a blessing annexed to it, a glory and a majesty in it, an efficacy with it, that no other book has the like. Therefore Luther professed he would burn his books he had writ, rather than they should divert people from reading the scriptures.

2. It is the greatest and most excellent of the works of God to be seen in the world, Psalms 138:2. "I will-worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. If the world beautified with sun, moon, and stars, be as a precious ring, the bible is the diamond in the ring The sparkling stars, and that glorious globe of light the sun, yet leave but a dark world, where there is no bible. Were it put to the choice of the saints either to quit the sun out of the firmament, or the bible out of the world, they would choose the former, but never the latter; for that they cannot want till they go there where they shall read all in the face of Jesus. For that must needs be most excellent that has most of God in it.

3. It is the oracles of God, Romans 3:2. This was the chief of the Jewish privileges, without which their temple, altar, &c. would have been but dumb signs. The Pagan world did highly reverence and prize the devil's oracles: but we have God's oracles, while we have the scriptures that

manifest to us the secrets of heaven. And if we discern aright who speaks in them, we must say, The voice of God, and not of man. Here is what you may consult safely in all your doubts and darknesses; here is what will lead you into all truth.

4. It is the laws of heaven, Psalms 19:7. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.' The lord and King of heaven, is our great Lawgiver, and the laws are written in this book. It concerns us to study it. Hence we must prove our title to heaven, the blessed inheritance, or we will never obtain it. From hence the sentence of our justification must be drawn, else we are still in a state of wrath. Here is the rule we must follow, that we may please God here; and from this book shall the sentence of our absolution or condemnation be drawn at the great day.

5. It is Christ's testament and latter-will, 1 Corinthians 11:25. Our Lord has died, and he has left us this bible as his testament; and that makes his children have such an affection to it. Herein he has left them his legacy, not only moveables, but the eternal inheritance; and his last will is now confirmed, that shall stand for ever without alteration. So all the believer's hopes are in this bible, and this is the security he has for all the privileges he can lay claim to. This is his charter for heaven, the disposition by which he lays claim to the kingdom. And therefore, if ye have any interest in the testament, ye must needs not be slighters of it.

6. It is the sceptre of his kingdom, Psalms 110:2. and it is a sceptre of righteousness. It is by this word he rules his church, and guides all his children in their way to the land that is far off. Wherever he hath a kingdom, he wields it; and the nations subjecting themselves to him, receive it. And where he rules in one's heart, it has place there too, Colossians 3:16. It is a golden sceptre of peace, stretched forth to rebels to win them by offering them peace: to fainting believers to give them peace. and whosoever will not subject themselves to it, shall be broken with his rod of iron.

7. It is the channel of influences, by which the communications of grace are made, and the waters of the sanctuary flow into the soul, Isaiah 59:1-21. The apostle appeals for this to the experience of the Galatians, Galatians 3:2. 'Received ye the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith ? Is the elect soul regenerated? the word is the incorruptible seed, whereof the new creature is formed, 1 Peter 1:23. Is faith begotten in the heart? it is by the word, Romans 10:17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Is the new creature to be nourished, strengthened, quickened, actuated, &c.? Christ is the fountain, faith the mouth of the soul, the word the pipes of conveyance, whereat faith must suck, as the child It the nipples.

8. It is the price of blood even the blood of Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:25. Had not the personal Word become flesh, and therein died to purchase redemption for us, we had never seen this written word among us. For it is the book of the covenant which is founded on the blood of the Mediator. It is the grant and conveyance of the right to the favour of God, and all saving benefits to believers; for which there could have been no place had not Christ died. And they that slight it, will be found to tread under foot blood of the covenant.

Mot. 7· Consider the usefulness of the word. If we consider the Author, we may be sure of the usefulness of the word. The apostle tells us, that it alone is sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Timothy 3:16-17· 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' There is no case a soul can be in, but it is suitable to their case, that desire to make use of it. To commend it to you from its usefulness, I will say these eight things.

1. It is a treasure to the poor, and such are we all by nature, Revelation 3:17. 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' 2 Corinthians 4:7. 'But we have this treasure In earthen vessels, that the Excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' Therefore the Lord bids us search the scriptures, in Illusion to those that search in mines for silver and gold. If the poor soul search here, receiving the word by faith, he is made up. He shall find there the discharge of his debt, a new right and title to the mortgaged inheritance. This word of the Lord is a treasure, (1.) For worth. People make not treasures of any but valuable things. There is nothing in the scriptures but what is highly valuable. There are there are eternal counsels of God touching our salvation; life and immortality brought to light; there are the purest precepts, the most awful threatenings, and the most precious promises, 2 Peter 1:4, &c.; (2.) For variety. In the scriptures shines the manifold wisdom of God. They that nauseate this book of the Lord, because they find not new things in it after some time perusing it, discover their senses not to be exercised to discern. For should we come to it ever so often, bringing fresh affections with us, we would find fresh entertainment there; as is evident by the glorious refreshment sometimes found in a word, that has been often gone over before without anything remarkable. And truly the saints shall never exhaust it while here; but as new discoveries are made in it in several ages, so it will be to the end. (3.) For abundance. There is in it not only for the present, but for the time to come, Isaiah 42:23. There is abundance of light, instruction, comfort, &c. and what is needful for the saints travelling heavenward, Psalms 119:162. And indeed it is the spoil to be gathered by us. Our Lord having fought the battle against death and devils, here the spoil lies to be gathered by us that remained at home when the fight was. (4.) For closeness. This word contains the wisdom of God in a mystery. It is a hid book to most of the world, and indeed a sealed book to those that remain in their natural blindness. Nor can we get into the treasure without the illumination of the same Spirit which dictated it, 1 Corinthians 2:10. There is a path here which the vulture's eye hath not seen, which the carnal eye cannot take up, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Therefore have we need to seek diligently, and pray, as Psalms 119:18. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.

2. It is life to the dead: 'The words that I speak unto you," says Christ, 'they are spirit, and they are life,' John 6:63. We are naturally dead in sins; but the word is the means of spiritual life. It is the ordinary means of conversion, Psalms 19:7. 'The law of the Lord--converteth the soul;' and of regeneration, 1 Peter 1:23. 'Being born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God.' By it the soul is persuaded into the covenant, and brought to embrace Jesus Christ. For thereby the Spirit is communicated to the elect of God. Thus it is of use to bring sinners home to God, from under the power of darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son.

3. It is light to the blind, Psalms 19:8. 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' It is a convincing light, to discover one's state to him, and so to rouse up the soul from its natural security. It pierces the heart as an arrow, and makes the careless sinner stand and consider his way: for it freely tells every one his faults, James 1:25. And while the child of God travels through a dark world, it serves to light him the way, 2 Peter 1:19.--' A light shining in a dark place;' and lets him see how to set down every step. Hence David says,'Thy word is a lamp unto

my feet, and a light unto my path,' Psalms 119:105.

4. It is awakening to those that are asleep, Song of Solomon 7:9· It is the voice of God which is full of majesty, to awaken the sleepy Christian to the exercise of grace. For as it is the means of begetting grace in the heart, so it is also the means of actuating and quickening thereof, Psalms 119:90. 'Thy word hath quickened me. Here the Christian may hear the alarm sound to rise up and be doing. Here are the precious promises as cords of love to draw, and the awful threatenings to set idlers to work.

5. It is a sword to the Christian soldier, Ephesians 6:17. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' Whoever has a mind for heaven must fight his way to it; for none get the crown but the conquerors, Revelation 3:21. They must go through many temptations, from the devil, the world, and the flesh; and the word is the sword for resisting of them. It is an offensive and defensive weapon. We see how our Lord Jesus wielded it, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7. 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.--It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And whatever be our temptations, if we be well versed in the word, we may from thence bring answers to them all.

6. It is a counsellor to those who are in straits, doubts, and difficulties, Psalms 119:24. 'Thy testimonies are--my counsellors.' Many a time the children of God, when tossed with doubts and fears, have found a quiet harbour there; and have got their way cleared to them there, when they knew not what to do. And no doubt, if we were more exercised unto godliness, and looking to the Lord in our straits, we would make more use of the bible, as the oracles of Heaven.

7· It is a comforter to those that are cast down, Psalms 119:49-50. 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.' The way to heaven lies through many tribulations, and afflictions are the trodden path to glory. But the Lord has left his people the bible as a cordial to support them under all their pressures from within and without. And indeed the sap of the word, and the sweetness of the promises, are never more lively relished, than when the people of God are exercised under afflictions. Then does that heavenly fountain flow most plentifully, when, created streams being dried up, the soul goes for all to the Lord. To sum up all in one word,

8. It is a cure for all diseases of the soul, Proverbs 4:22. 'My words are--health to all their flesh.' There is no malady that a soul is under, but there is a suitable remedy for it in the word, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. frequently quoted above, being adapted by infinite wisdom to the case of poor sinners. By It the simple may be made wise, the weak strengthened, the staggening confirmed, the hard heart melted, the shut heart opened, &c. it being the means the Spirit makes use of for these and all other such purposes.

Mot. 8. Consider the honourable epithets given to the scriptures. Amongst which I name only three.

1. The scriptures of truth, Daniel 10:21. Men may wrest the scriptures to patronize their errors but the whole word of God is most pure truth. Here are no mistakes, no weaknesses that adhere to all human composures. Here we may receive all that is taught us without hesitation. The hearers of men, or readers of their works, are divided into four sorts: Some like spunges, that suck up all, both good and bad: Some like sand glasses, who, what they receive at the one ear let go at the

other: Some like a strainer, that lets all the good pass through, but keeps the dregs: Some like the sieve, that keeps the good grain, and lets through what is not worth. These last are only to be approved; but in the reading of the word we must be as the first sort.

2. Holy scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:15. They are the word of a holy God, from whom nothing can come but what is holy. It consists of holy commands, holy promises, holy threatenings, instructions, directions, &c. And holy hearts will love and reverence them for that very reason.

3. The book of the Lord. What can be said more to commend it to us, if we have any regard to the Lord himself? If I could tell you of a book that fell down from heaven, And were to be had by any means, who would not be curious to have such a book and study it? This is the book that contains the counsels of heaven, and is given from heaven to the church, to let men see the way to it. Mot. Last. Consider the danger of slighting the word. It exposes to sin, and consequently to the greatest danger. How can they keep the way of the Lord that do not study to acquaint themselves with it? They must needs walk in darkness that do not make use of the light; and this leads to everlasting darkness, John 3:19. If by this word we must be judged, how can they think to stand that neglect it?

Chapter 52

05.08. Useful Directions for Reading and Searching the Scriptures

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and Searching the Scriptures.

1. Keep an ordinary in reading of them, that ye may be acquainted with the whole; and make this reading a part of your secret duties. Not that ye should bind up yourselves to an ordinary, so as never to read by choice, but that ordinarily this tends most to edification. Some places are more difficult, some may seem very bare for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on it all as God's word, not to be slighted, and read it with faith and reverence, no doubt ye would find advantage.

2. Set a special mark, one way or other, on those passages you read, which you find most suitable to your case, condition, or temptations; or such as ye have found to move your hearts more than other passages. And it will be profitable often to review these.

3. Compare one scripture with another, the more obscure with that which is more plain, 2 Peter 1:20. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the scriptures; and to this good use serve the marginal notes on bibles. And keep Christ in your eye, for to him the scriptures of the Old Testament (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices) look, as well as those of the New.

4. Read with a holy attention, arising from the consideration of the majesty of God, and the reverence due to him. This must be done with attention, Ist, to the words; 2nd, to the sense; and, 3rd, to the divine authority of the scripture, and the bond it lays on the conscience for obedience, 1 Thessalonians 2:13. 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.'

5. Let your main end in reading the scriptures be practice, and not bare knowledge, James 1:22. 'But ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.' Read that you may learn and do, and that without any limitation or distinction, but that whatever you see God requires, you may study to practice.

6. Beg of God and look to him for his Spirit. For it is the Spirit that dictated it, that it must be savingly understood by, 1 Corinthians 2:11. 'For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' And therefore before you read, it is highly reasonable you beg a blessing on what you are to read.

7 Beware of a worldly fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God; and the worldly heart cannot favour them. In an eclipse of the moon, the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. So the world, in the heart, coming betwixt you and the light of the word, keeps its divine light from you.

8. Labour to be exercised unto godliness, and to observe your case. For an exercised frame helps mightily to understand the scriptures. Such a Christian will find his case in the word, and the word

will give light to his case, and his case light into the word.

9. Whatever you learn from the word, labour to put it in practice. For to him that hath shall be given. No wonder they get little insight into the bible, who make no conscience of. practicing what they know. But while the stream runs into a holy life, the fountain will be the freer.

Chapter 53

05.09. EXPLANATION OF WHAT IT IS TO PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS

EXPLANATION

OF WHAT IT IS TO

PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS

1. Negatively. It is not a bare faithless mentioning of his name in our prayers, nor concluding our prayers therewith, Matthew 7:21. The saints use the words, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Corinthians 15:57. but often is that scabbard produced, while the sword of the Spirit is not in it. The words are said, but the faith is not exercised.

2. Positively. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray,

First, At his command, to go to God by his order, John 16:24. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name," says he, "ask, and ye shall receive." Christ as God commands all men to pray, to offer that piece of natural duty to God; but that is not the command meant. But Christ as Mediator sends his own to his Father to ask supply of their wants, and allows them to tell that he sent them, as one recommends a poor body to a friend, John 16:24. just cited. So to pray in the name of Christ is to go to God as sent by the poor man’s friend. So it imports,

(1.) The souls being come to Christ in the first place, John 15:7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you". He that would pray aright, must do as those who made Blastus the king’s chamberlain their friend first, and then made their suit to their king, Acts 12:20.

(2.) The soul’s taking its encouragement to pray from Jesus Christ, Hebrews 4:14-16. "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. 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. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The way to the throne in heaven is blocked up by our sins. And sinners have no confidence to seek the Lord. Jesus Christ came down from heaven, died for the criminals, and gathers them to himself by effectual calling. He, as having all interest with his Father, bids them go to his Father in his name, and ask what they need, assuring them of acceptance. And from thence they take their encouragement, viz. from his promises in the word. And he gives them his token with them, which the Father will own, and that is his own Spirit, Romans 8:26-27. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Secondly, It is to direct our prayers to God through Jesus Christ, 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," Hebrews 13:15. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name; " depending wholly on Christ's merit and intercession for access, acceptance, and a gracious return.

(1.) Depending on Christ for access to God, Ephesians 3:12. "In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him." There is no access to God but through him, John 14:6. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." They that attempt otherwise to come unto God, will get the door thrown in their face. But we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is the Secretary of heaven.

(2.) Depending on him for acceptance of our prayers, Ephesians 1:6. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift. If one lay the stress of the acceptance of his prayers on his frame, enlargement, tenderness, &c. they prayer will not be accepted. A crucified Christ only can bear the weight of the acceptance of either our persons or performances.

(3.) Depending on him for a gracious return, 1 John 5:14 "and this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." No prayers are heard and answered but for the Mediator's sake; and whatever petitions agreeable to God's will are put up to God, in this dependence, are heard. But why must we pray in the name of Christ? The reason of this may be taken up in these two things.

1. There is no access for a sinful creature to God without a Mediator, Isaiah 59:2. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." John 14:6. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Sin has set us at a distance from God, and has bolted the door of our access to him, that it is beyond our power, or that of any creature, to open it for us. His justice staves off the criminal, his holiness the unclean creature, without there be an acceptable person to go betwixt him and us. Our God is a consuming fire: and so there is no immediate access for a sinner to him.

2. And there is none appointed nor fit for that work but Christ, 1 Timothy 2:5. It is he alone who is our great high Priest. None but he has satisfied justice for our sins. And as he is the only Mediator of redemption, so he is the only Mediator of intercession, 1 John 2:1. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." The sweet savour of his merit only is capable to procure acceptance to our prayers, in themselves unsavoury, Revelation 8:3-4.

05.10. By what means Believers pray in a manner acceptable to God

By what means Believers pray

in a manner acceptable to God. By the help of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 4:6. 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Romans 8:26. likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' There are two sorts of prayers.

1st, A prayer wrought out by virtue of a, gift of knowledge and utterance. This is bestowed on many reprobates, and that gift may be useful to others, and to the church. But as it is merely of that sort, it is not accepted, nor does Christ put it in before the Father for acceptance.

For.2d. There is a prayer wrought in men by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah 12:10. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications:' and that is the only acceptable prayer to God, James 5:16. 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' effectual, Gr. inwrought. The right praying is praying in the Spirit. It is a gale blowing from heaven, the breathing of the Spirit in the saints, that carries them out in the prayer, which comes the length of the throne. Now, the Spirit helps to pray,

1. As a teaching and instructing Spirit, affording proper matter of prayer, causing us to know what we pray for, Romans 8:26. forecited; enlightening the mind in the knowledge of our needs, and those of others bringing into our remembrance these things, suggesting them to us according to the word, together with the promises of God, on which prayer is grounded, John 14:26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,--shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.' Hence it is that the saints are sometimes carried out in prayer for things which they had no view of before, and carried by some things they had.

2. As a quickening, exciting Spirit, Romans 8:26.; the Spirit qualifying the soul with praying graces and affections, working in the praying person sense of needs, faith, fervency, humility, &c. Psalms 10:17. 'Thou wilt prepare their heart.' The man may go to his knees in a very unprepared frame for prayer, yet the Spirit blowing, he is helped. It is for this reason the Spirit is said to make intercession for us, namely, in so far as he teaches and quickens, puts us in a praying frame, and draws our petitions, as it were, which the Mediator presents. This praying with the help of the Spirit is peculiar to the saints, James 5:16.; yet they have not that help at all times, nor always in the same measure; for sometimes the Spirit, being provoked, departs, and they are left in a withered condition. So there is great need to look for a breathing, and pant for it, when we are to go to duty : for if there be not a gale, we will tug at the oars but heartlessly.

Let no man think that a readiness and volubility of expression in prayer, is always the effect of the Spirit's assistance. For that may be the product of a gift, and of the common operations of the Spirit, removing the impediment of the exercise of it. And it is evident one may be scarce of words,

and have groans instead of them, while the Spirit helps him to pray, Romans 8:26. Neither is every mood of affections in prayer, the effect of the Spirit of prayer. There are of those which puff up a man, but make him never a whit more holy, tender in his walk, &c. But the influences of the Spirit never miss to be humbling but sanctifying. Hence, says David, " Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chronicles 29:14.; and, says the apostle, " We have no confidence in the flesh," Php 3:3.

05.11. What classes of Men we are to pray for.

What classes of Men we are to pray for. Not for the dead. David ceased praying for his child when once dead, 2 Samuel 12:21-23. It is vain and useless; for as the tree falls, it must lie. We have neither precept nor promise about it; and it was raised upon the false opinion of purgatory. But the dead are in an unalterable state, Hebrews 9:27.' It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'

Nor for those who are known to have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, 1 John 5:16. for God has declared that sin to be unpardonable, This is very rare, and therefore one would beware of rashness in this matter. But,

1. In general, we are to pray for all sorts of men living, ' for kings, and all that are in authority,' 1 Timothy 2:1-2.' I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty:' for Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Pagans, noble and ignoble, &c. They are capable of God's grace and favour, and we are to desire it for them. But we are not to pray for every particular person whatsoever, 1 John 5:16.' There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it.' So that it is an unwarrantable petition, that God would have mercy on, and save all mankind, for the contrary of that is revealed. Yea, we should pray for all sorts of men who shall live hereafter, as our Lord did, John 17:20. 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.' But,

2. In particular, we are to pray, not only for ourselves, as Jacob did for deliverance from the hand of his brother Esau, Genesis 32:11. but for,

(1.) The whole church of Christ upon earth. Hence says the text, Praying always with all prayer, and supplication for all saints. To no party must we confine the communion of prayers, to whom God has not confined his grace. All the members of the mystical body must share particularly in our prayers, because they are the members of Christ, whatever difference be betwixt us and them in lesser things. The sympathy betwixt the members of the same body of our Lord requires this. And it is a sad sign not to be so affected, Amos 6:6. ' They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

(2.) Magistrates: ' Kings, and all that are in authority,' 1 Timothy 2:2. It was about three hundred years after Christ ere the magistrates were Christians, nevertheless the apostle bids pray for them ; because the quite and peace of the commonwealth and kingdom depends much on their management; and infidelity, or indifference in religion, does not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him. Their hearts are in the Lord's hand, Proverbs 21:1. Their influence is great, so is their work, and so are their temptations; and if they be evil men, there is the more need to be earnest with God on their behalf. Let us bless God that we have a Protestant King on the throne, remembering how seasonably the Lord sent him, and how much depends on his safety, and the safety of his royal family.

(3.) Ministers, Colossians 4:3.’ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.’ Psalms 132:9. ’ Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.’ There is a near relation betwixt the people of God and their ministers. They have a weighty work in their hands, which, if it misgive, will not only be their own loss, but the people’s. People may have a minister so straitened, as to do them no good, Colossians 4:3. Though he be not so, yet he may be useless to them ; therefore, says the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 5:25. ’Brethren, pray for us.’ I leave it with that, Romans 15:30.’ Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.’

(4.) Our Christian acquaintance, James 5:16. ’Pray one for another.’ Communion of prayers is a special benefit of Christian friendship and acquaintance. And It Is no small mercy and encouragement to have interest in their prayers, who have interest at the throne of grace.

(5.) The place and congregation we live in, and are members of. The captives of Babylon were to pray for the place they lived in, Jeremiah 29:7. how much more should we pray for a Christian congregation whereof we are members ? The better it be with them, it will be the better with you; and so contrariwise.

(6.) Our families and relations. The nearer any stand related to us, we have the more need to be concerned for them at the throne of grace. We find Job sacrificing for his family, Job 1:5; a master praying for his servant, 2 Kings 6:17; and a servant for his master, Genesis 24:12.

(7.) We must pray for enemies, Matthew 5:44. This is hardest to bring men to. But we have the express command of Christ for it, and his example, Luke 23:34. followed by the martyr Stephen, Acts 7:60. Nay, forgiving them is necessary to our forgiveness: " Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." There may be much selfishness in praying for those that love us; but that kindly concern for our enemies makes us liker God, Matthew 5:45.

05.12. For What, And How We Are To Pray.

For What, And How We Are To Pray.

We are to pray for things agreeable to God's revealed will, and for such things only, 1 John 5:14. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." We may not present unto God unlawful desires, nor petitions, in favour of our lust, James 4:3. These must needs be an abomination, and a daring affront to a holy God. And indeed wicked things are so much the more wicked, as they are brought into our addresses to a holy God. The matter of our prayers must be regulated by the word of God, wherein he has shown what is pleasing to him, and what is not so. The signification of God's will and good pleasure as to the good to be bestowed on men. and our prayers, are to be of equal extent. Wherefore, let us see that whatever we pray for be within the compass of the command or the promise.

Such are all things tending to the glory of God, Matthew 6:9. 'After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;' or to the welfare of the church, Psalms 122:6. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee;' to our own good, temporal, spiritual, or eternal, Matthew 7:11. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?' or that of others, Psalms 125:4, ' Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

But how are we to pray, if we would pray rightly and acceptably?

1. Understandingly; understanding what we say, 1 Corinthians 14:15. Therefore they must be in a known tongue. And to repeat words before God, while we know not what they mean, can never be prayer indeed.

2. Reverently, Ecclesiastes 5:1. " Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.' We must maintain an outward reverence in expression, voice, and gesture; since in prayer we are before the great God : an inward reference especially, having an awful apprehension of the majesty of God before whom we appear, Psalms 89:7.' God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.' Hebrews 12:28. 'Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' Fear and trembling become a creature, much more a guilty creature, before ;A holy God. And fearless presumptuous addresses to God are the produce of a hard heart.

3. Humbly Psalms 10:17 'Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble thou wilt cause thine ear to hear;' with a deep sense of our own unworthiness and sinfulness on our spirits. In prayer we come to beg, not to buy or demand our right, and therefore should be sensible of unworthiness, Genesis 32:10. '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 staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two

bands;' and the more grace, the more unworthy will we be in our own eyes, Genesis 18:27. 'And Abraham answered and said, Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.' And going to God, we must turn our eyes inward, with the Publican, Luke 18:14.; on our own evils of heart and life.

4. Feelingly; being deeply affected with a sense of our needs, like the prodigal, Luke 15:17-19. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and Before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants.' Alas ! what does it avail to go to God with an insensible heart; to sit down at His table without spiritual hunger; to come to his door rich and increased with goods. In our own conceit ! Such are sent empty away. Therefore it is a piece of very necessary preparation for prayer, to look over our wants, ere we go to prayer.

5. Believingly, Matthew 21:22. ' All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. He who prays acceptably must be endued with saving faith, Hebrews 11:6. An unbeliever cannot pray acceptably, 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 ?' Hence the prayers of the unrenewed man are all lost in respect of gracious acceptance. Moreover, the believer must be in the exercise of faith in prayer, which must be mixed with faith.

One must have a faith of particular confidence in prayer, as to the things prayed for, Mark 11:24. 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall receive them. For where that is altogether wanting, the prayer can never be accepted, James 1:6. ' Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.' Since it must needs be highly dishonoring to God, to come to him to ask, without any expectation from, or trust in him, as to what is asked.

Quest. How may one have that faith? Ans. By applying the promises, and believing them. If the things be absolutely necessary, the promise makes these very things sure to them who come to God through Christ for them, as peace, pardon, &c. If they be not, then the promise secures God's doing the best, that either he will give the very thing desired, or what is as good. And we are to believe accordingly.

6. Sincerely, Psalms 145:18. 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.' Hypocrisy and dissimulation in prayer, when the heart goes not along with the lips, mars the acceptance of prayers. There are feigned lips, Psalms 17:1. when the affections do not keep pace with the words in prayer: when sin is confessed, but the heart not humbled under it; petitions are put up, but no serious desire of the things asked, Jeremiah 29:13. 'And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.'

7. Fervently, James 5:16. ' Confess your faults one to another, an pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' Cold, lifeless, and formal prayers, are not of the right stamp. We should, as in a most weighty matter, be boiling hot, Romans 12:11. Importunity in prayer is most pleasing to God. It consists not in a multitude of words, Matthew 6:7; but in a holy earnestness of heart to be heard, Psalms 143:7; and pleading with the Lord, by allowable arguments, as one who is in deep earnest, Job 23:4. A heart warmed

by a live-coal from God’s altar will produce this.

8. Watchfully; watching unto prayer, as in the text; taking heed to our spirits, that they do not wander. Wandering thoughts in prayer mar many prayers. They come on like the fowls on the, carcase, and will devour it, if not driven away. A carnal frame of heart is the mother of them, and rash indeliberate approaches to God help them forward. In that case one should be like the builders of the wall, having the trowel in the one hand, and the sword in the other, resolutely to resist vain thoughts, and refuse to harbour them. Nay, turn the cannon on the enemy, consider them as affording new matter of humiliation, and a clamant occasion of plying the throne of grace more closely. If they be striven against, they will not mar your acceptance; but if not they will.

9. Perseveringly; watching thereunto with all perseverance as in the text. When we have tabled our suit before the throne, we must not let it fall, but insist upon it, Luke 18:1. Hold on, with one petition, one prayer, on the back of another, till it be granted, Isaiah 62:1. ’ In due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.’

Lastly, Dependingly; waiting upon the Lord with humble submission to his holy will, and looking for an answer, Micah 8:7.’ Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation : my God will hear me.’ We must come away in a waiting depending frame. No wonder those prayers be not regarded which we never look after, and are not concerned for the answer of. But are all such prayers accepted, heard, and answered ?

1. An unrenewed man cannot thus pray, neither are such a one`s prayers at any time accepted, Proverbs 15:8. ’The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,’ John 9:31. ’God heareth not sinners.

2. God’s own people do not always thus pray, neither are all their prayers accepted. For, says the Psalmist, Psalms 66:18.’ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.’

3. But all such prayers, being the produce of God’s Spirit in the saints, are presented by the Mediator; and are accepted, heard, and answered by the Father, though not presently answered, Psalms 22:2. yet they shall be answered in due time, either by granting the very thing desired, 1 John 5:15.’ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him;’ or something as good, Genesis 17:18-19. ’ And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee ! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed ; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him;’ 2 Corinthians 12:8-9. ’For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.’ "

05.13. THE NECESSITY OF SECRET PRAYER.

THE NECESSITY OF SECRET PRAYER.

It is not necessary in regard of merit, as if we could procure heaven by it. The only ground of eternal life in the mansions of bliss is the righteousness of a crucified Redeemer. Beggars pay no debts, but confess insufficiency, saying with the prophet, Daniel 9:5. 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.' But it is necessary,

1. In regard of the command of God. He, by a plain and express command, requires it; and that command binds it as a necessary duty upon us. To neglect it, therefore, is a direct violation of the command of the great God and Lawgiver; and to make conscience of it is a necessary and proper act of obedience to the divine will.

2. To give God the glory of his omniscience and omnipresence. When we pray to our Father which is in secret, we plainly declare, that we believe he knows and sees all things, that the darkness and the light are alike unto him; and that he is the witness and inspector of all our actions, and will call us to an account for all our thoughts, words, and actions, which are well known to him.

3. To evidence our sincerity, that it is not to be seen of men that we pray; that we are not actuated from motives of ostentation and vain-glory, but from regard to the divine command, and a sincere desire to serve God ; though indeed it will not hold that all such as pray in secret are sincere; for, alas ! men may be very assiduous in this duty, and yet be far from being sincere Christians, or accepted of God therein.

4. In regard that none know our case so well as ourselves: and therefore, though the master of the family pray in the family, yet we ought to pray by ourselves, in order to make known our particular case and wants unto God, which none other can know, and to ask such blessings and mercies of him as we stand in need of, and are suitable to our circumstances.

5. In regard that, if we know our own hearts, we cannot but have somewhat to say unto the Lord, that we cannot, nor would it be at all proper to say before others, respecting both confession of sins and supplication for mercies. Hence the spouse says, Cant. 7:11, 12, Song of Solomon 7:11-12. "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth unto the fields: let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves."

6. In regard of our wants continually recurring on our hands, and daily and hourly temptations, that may call for this exercise, when family-prayer cannot be had. What man is so well supplied, both as to temporal and spiritual blessings, as to have no occasion for asking supplies from above ? Man is a needy and indigent creature in all respects; as a creature he lives on the bounties of providence, and as a Christian on the grace which is in Christ Jesus ; and therefore he must daily apply to the throne of grace for necessary supplies in both. And as we are daily surrounded with

temptations, and have no strength to resist or repel them, we must fetch in strength from God in Christ by prayer, lest we fall and be overcome by the temptations in our way.

Thus it appears from these considerations, that prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all. And surely all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious will make conscience of this important and useful exercise.

Chapter 58

05.14. Important Questions concerning Secret Prayer stated and answered.

Important Questions concerning Secret Prayer stated and answered.

Quest. 1. What is the proper season of this duty of secret prayer ? or when are we called to this exercise ?

Ans. 1. We are doubtless to be very frequent in this duty. Thus we are called to " pray always," Ephesians 6:18, and "without ceasing," 1 Thessalonians 5:17, that is, at all proper times, and to be continually in a praying frame, or to pray inwardly, though we utter not a word with our lips.

2. Whenever God calls us to it, putting an opportunity in our hands, and moving and inciting us to it, then we are to go about it. Thus, when the Lord Jesus says, "Seek ye my face;" our hearts should say unto him, " Thy face, Lord, will we seek," Psalms 27:8. And thus we have daily calls and invitations to-this duty, which we should carefully regard, and conscientiously embrace, lest we quench the Spirit, and provoke the Lord to harden our hearts from his fear.

3. The saints in scripture have sometimes been more, sometimes less frequent in this exercise. Thus David was sometimes employed thrice, sometimes seven times a-day in prayer, Psalms 55:17. and Psalms 119:164, and Daniel three times, even at a very perilous juncture, Daniel 6:10. From whose practice the frequency of performing this duty evidently appears.

4. Morning and evening at least we should pray, and not neglect this duty. This appears from our Lord’s practice, Mark 1:35. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed;" Matthew 14:23. "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, he was there alone;" from the practice of the saints in scripture, Psalms 55:2. "Attend unto me, and hear me : I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;" and Psalms 5:2. "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God : for unto thee will I pray ;" and from the morning and evening sacrifice under the legal dispensation, which were daily offered, and should excite us to offer up unto God daily the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. And the very light of nature teaches us so much; that when we are preserved through the silent watches of the dark night, and from the perils we may be exposed unto in that gloomy season, we should acknowledge the goodness and kindness of God therein ; and that when we are preserved through the day, from the many snares and temptations we are liable to amidst the cares and distractions of our business, we should bless God for his preserving and protecting mercy, and commit ourselves, and all our concerns, into the hand of God, when we are going to take necessary rest, that we may fall asleep under a sense of his love, and may rise again to resume the business of our callings with his blessing and favour.

Quest. 2. What is the proper place for secret prayer ?

Ans. A secret place is the most proper place for this exercise; and though every body has not a closet, or retired apartment, into which he may go in and shut the door, yet any place where we may be retired from the view and observation of others, answers the purpose ; though in other respects it be a public place, yet if it be dark, and the voice kept low, it is justly a secret place. And to a place of that sort did our Lord retire for secret prayer, Matthew 14:23. perhaps not having proper conveniency in the place where he lodged all night. And indeed there is not a person but may meet with such a secret place every day, if he have a disposition for this exercise.

Quest. 3. What gesture are we to use in secret prayer ?

Ans. 1. Holy scripture does not bind us to any gesture particularly; but we find these four gestures of the body in prayer spoken of there, viz. standing, Mark 11:25; lying along on the face, Matthew 26:19; kneeling, Daniel 6:10. Ephesians 3:14; and sitting, 2 Samuel 7:18.

2.Whatever the gesture be, let it be a reverent one, that may express a humble and reverent frame of spirit. Hence we are commanded to "glorify God in our bodies," 1 Corinthians 6:20. 3. I shall say these two things for the further determination of this question. Ist, Let it be such a gesture as is conformable unto, or flows natively from, the present disposition of the heart. Thus in extraordinary cases we find the saints were wont to fall on their faces, 2 Samuel 12:16. And so likewise did the Lord Jesus in the garden, on the eve of his sufferings, Matthew 26:39. 2d, Yet let it be always to edification; and let that gesture be chosen which is most conducive to devotion, and occasions least distraction in the duty: As if kneeling be dangerous for the body, and so may tend to disturb the mind, let another gesture be chosen that is not attended with these inconveniences; though kneeling is certainly the most eligible gesture, and expressive of that humility which must ever accompany this exercise. And the same thing we may say of closing the eyes, or keeping them open; though praying with the eyes shut is certainly to be preferred.

Quest. 4. What are we to say of the voice in secret prayer?

Ans. 1. The duty may be performed without using the voice, as was done by Moses in the strait the children of Israel were reduced to, after their escape from Egypt, when high and inaccessible mountains were on each side of them, the Red Sea before them, and the Egyptian host at their heels ready to cut them off. In this dilemma we find that great man crying to the Lord, though not with an audible voice, Exodus 14:15. Thus the voice is not to be used when people cannot do so without being heard, or when through weakness of body, or disquiet of mind, they are unfit for speaking with the tongue.

2. Yet where the voice may be used, and that with convenience and propriety, it should be made use of; and that, Ist, because we are to glorify God with our bodies ; and particularly our tongue is given to be an instrument of glorifying God; I Awake, my glory, says David, Psalms 57:8. 2d, Because the voice is of good use in secret prayer, to stir up the affections, and to stay the mind from wandering. Yet an affected loudness of the voice, whereby the secret prayer is made public, is a sad sign of great hypocrisy, which every serious Christian will guard against.

Quest. 5. Is secret prayer a sure mark of sincerity ? or can one pray in secret, and yet be an hypocrite ?

Ans. This is not out of the reach of the hypocrite ? A hypocrite may come this length, and much farther. Judas was among the rest whom our Lord taught to pray in secret, and ye all know what was his fate. But though a hypocrite may continue a long time, nay, many years, in the practice of secret prayer; yet it is scarcely to be thought that he will always do so, if he live a long life : For, says Job, "Will he [the hypocrite] always call upon God ?" Psalms 27:10. It is not to be thought that he will, as he has no communion with God in the duty. And therefore adds the same holy man, "Will he always delight himself in the Almighty ?" It is communion with God that is to be enjoyed in secret prayer, and the delight the soul has in it, that inclines a person to persevere in that exercise.

Inst. But if one pray not to be seen of men, can he be a hypocrite?

Ans. Yes, he may. For the terrors of God scalding the conscience, and a desire to lay the ferment thereby brought into the mind, may excite one to the duty, and put the applause of men entirely out of the mind. But secret prayer, conscientiously practised, and attended with manifestations of the Lord’s love and favour, smiles of his face, returns of what was asked, and continued faith and fervency, are undoubted signs of sincerity.

Chapter 59

05.15. Motives To Secret Prayer, With Answers To Objections Commonly Made.....

Motives To Secret Prayer, With Answers To Objections Commonly Made To The Performance Of This Duty

1. It is a piece of worship expressly commanded of God, and it is directly required by him, Ephesians 6:18. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.' Will ye then counteract God's express command? If ye do, it will be at your peril.

2. Are you not engaged to this duty? Are not the vows of God upon you for the performance of it? Were ye not baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to worship them, and that in all parts of worship, of which prayer is a principal one? Have not some of you been admitted to the Lord's table, when ye professed to renew your baptismal engagements? And perhaps some of you have sick-bed vows on you to that purpose.

3. Have ye not secret sins, secret wants, and secret temptations? and shall ye not have secret prayers adapted to each, requesting of the Lord the pardon of your secret sins, the supply of your secret wants, and grace to resist and overcome your secret temptations?

4. This is your known duty; and therefore remember, that 'the servant that knew his master's will, but did it not, shall be beaten with double stripes.' Wherefore, I charge you, as you will answer to God at death and at judgment, and as you love your own souls, and would not eternally perish, to set about this necessary and important duty. But some are ready to muster up a variety of objections against this duty; the chief of which I shall endeavour to obviate.

Object.1. I have no time for secret prayer, for may work and business. Ans.1. This is thy greatest work, even the salvation of thy soul, in comparison of which all thy other work is a mere trifle: and wilt thou take time for thy other work, and not for this work, that challenges thy utmost care and attention? 2. Fool's haste is no speed. To rise out of the bed, and to go immediately to secular work, is foolish cursed haste. How canst thou look for a blessing on thy work without prayer? 3. Rise the sooner every morning, that you may not be scrimped as to time for this exercise, as our blessed Lord did, Mark 1:35. 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' How wilt thou answer to God at the great day, for spending that time in sleep, which thou shouldest spent in secret prayer? Daniel would not omit this exercise, though at the hazard of his life.

Object.2.We are so wearied with our work through the day, that we are not able to pray in the evening. Ans.1. What difference is there betwizt you and the beasts that take their ease when their work is done, without any more ado? 2. You will take your meat for your bodies, though ever so weary; and why will ye not think of and provide meat for your perishing souls? John 4:6, John 4:32. 'Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well:

and it was about the sixth hour, But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' 3. Notwithstanding ye may be tired, do what ye are able. We are not commanded to tell you to make your prayers short or long; but by nomeans to neglect secret prayer altogether, which is very dangerous. But I suppose, that when you say your body is not able to subsist with secret prayer, that yet if ye could gain a sixpence at that very time, you would spend twice much more time for that paltry gain; and yet slight the concerns of your souls, under this frivolous pretence.

Object. 3. We have no convenient place for secret prayer. Ans. Find out once a willing heart for this exercise, and I shall engage for it you shall find a place.

Object. 4.But there are prayers in our family, and I join therein; what needs more! Ans. Poor soul! hast thou no more to say of thyself to God, but what the master of the family says? Alas! thou knowest not thyself, and the dreadful case thou art in by nature; which if thou didst, thou wouldst not think of joining in prayer with others enough. Thou thinkest it sufficient that the master of the family pray for thee, and the other members of his family, and thou liest by without concerning thyself about duty for thyself; wilt thou think it enough, that he go to heaven for thee, and thou be shut out forever?

Object.5. But (says the master of the family) I pray with my family, and I hope that is enough for me. Ans. In this command in the text, Christ has not excepted thee, neither dare I. Again, dost thou so well discharge family prayer, that thou hast no escapes or failures to be matter of secret prayer? I tell you plainly, that God will not have his worship halved: he will have either the whole or nothing. Being conscientious in family-prayer, which is as discharge family-duty, the more wilt thou be inclined to the practice of secret duty. The false mother was dividing the child, not the true one.

Object. 6. Some women that have children to nurse and wait on, think that frees them for this duty. Ans. It is a sad observation of many women, who, while they are unmarried, and are not involved in the cares and troubles of a family, have some profession and practice of religion; but as soon as they get a house to manage, and have the care of young children especially, they cast off all religion, as if they had no more concern therein. But surely the very sight of the child whom thou hast conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, should remind thee of thy original guilt and corruption, and incite thee to apply to the blood and Spirit of Christ for pardon and cleansing, and be a powerful spur to thee to set about this great duty of secret prayer. And remember, that the welfare of thy own soul, and that of the child, is more than that of the child's bodily welfare, which deserves but the second care in comparison of the other. I would not have you by any means to cast off the care of the young one's temporal welfare; but thou mayst so observe times and seasons, as thou mayst take time for this duty morning and evening, though it be not immediately after thou risest, or before thou art rocking the cradle, or suckling the child. Alas! it had been telling many, that they had the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.

Object.7. God knows the heart, and what needs so much ado about praying in secret, as if God knew not what we wanted, or what we would be at, till we sit down on our knees, and tell him? Ans. God knows the heart of such an objector to be a graceless heart, and his end to be destruction, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 7:20; and his heart to be a foolish atheistical heart, that will not call upon God, Psalms 14:1. 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good.' Again, what is this but to argue God's command to be foolish? He bids you pray, and you say it is needless. O daring

presumption! Though the Lord not only knows your heart, but has a mind to give blessings to poor sinners, he will have you seek them by prayer: 'For these things,' says he, 'will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them,' Ezekiel 36:37. God never confers signal mercies on his people, without first pouring out on them the Spirit of faith and prayer, and determines them to seek ardently the very thing he has a mind to grant them. And this method is for the glory of his name, and for our real benefit.

Object.8. Age and infirmity will not suffer me to go about that duty. Ans. Will it suffer you to do your business in the world, and will it not suffer you to manage your soul's business, which is of infinitely greater importance? It would seem, that the nearer we draw to the grave, the more active we should be in preparing for it. It were good that old people would mind heaven more, and the world less, as they have so short a time to stay here. The concerns of the other world should mainly engross their care and attention, and they should then redouble their diligence in improving their span of time, and doing that which perhaps they too much neglected in the days of health and vigour. 'The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness,' Proverbs 16:31; 'But the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed,' Isaiah 65:20. Let this sound an alarm to all the old sinners among you, that ye may yet apply to the merciful Redeemer, who sets even some to work in the vineyard at the eleventh hour. It is sad to be tottering under the miseries and infirmities of old age, and yet to have no prospect of a happy landing. Fly then to Christ, thou old decrepit sinner, while his call reaches thee, lest thou speedily perish without remedy.

Object.9. I am too young to mind secret prayer. Ans. You are too old never to have entered on God's service. Remember that Josiah, when he was but eight years old, began to seek the Lord God of his father David. Obadiah, Ahab's steward, feared the Lord greatly from his youth. John Baptist was sanctified from the womb; and so was the prophet Jeremiah. Timothy knew the holy scriptures from a child. You can never begin to be religious too soon. None ever repented that they sought the to seek him sooner. You are as liable to death as the oldest person here, have a soul as precious as theirs, and as much need to mind your best and eternal interests as they. Up then and be doing, without putting off a moment longer.

Object.10. I cannot pray. Ans. The truth is thou wilt not pray, Psalms 10:4. If thou hadst a will to the duty, thou wouldst soon learn. But if thou wouldst learn to pray, go to God that he may teach thee, as Christ taught the disciples; and consider the absolute need thou hast of divine instruction in this matter. Use the one talent, and God will increase it. Wherefore set about this weighty duty, and neglect it not. Think seriously with yourselves, whether those who are now in hell, and when they lived neglected secret prayer like you, would do so still if they were in the world again. I scarce think they would. Pray now, therefore, lest ye repent your neglect, when it will be too late, and ye are tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone. Again, think with yourselves how you will get this criminal neglect digested on a death-bed, when ye are ready to leap into eternity, without having once prayed for God's mercy through Christ to your souls; and how you will get it digested before the awful tribunal of God, when he will drive you from his blessed presence for ever. Think with yourselves how precious time is, and what a sad business it is to spend it in pursuing the world and lying vanities, and neglecting communion with God, wherein lies the life of the soul. What! will ye delay it yet awhile? O do it not! for delays are dangerous. Will ye be so foolish as to venture all on two or three words on a sick-bed or death-bed? Perhaps you will not get one, but may be

hurried away in a moment. Consider the awful passage, Proverbs 1:24-28. 'Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all me counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.'

Exhort. 2. Be frequent in this duty, morning and evening at least, and at other times when your conveniency will allow, and go not only to it now and then. Consider,

1. God's express command, which ties you to pray always continually, and without ceasing. This does not mean, that you should do nothing but pray, or spend your whole time in this exercise. No; but denotes frequency, and embracing every opportunity that offers for so delightful and profitable a duty. It says you should be always in a praying frame, never having your minds so much engrossed in worldly concerns, as to be indisposed to call upon God in prayer.

2. Frequency in this duty is a good sign of a good frame and an excellent mean to maintain and preserve it. They who are not frequent in this exercise, do thereby show that their frame and disposition is not spiritual, but carnal, much under the conduct of sense, and attachment to sensible things. Whereas, if a person were frequent in this duty, it would be a token of a heart weaned from the world, and much conversant in the things of God.

3. It is dangerous to grow slack and remiss in this duty, as mournful experience has testified in the case of many. They who having been for years frequently employed in this heavenly exercise do at last turn and then bow a knee before him, do thereby declare they have lost the life and relish of the power of religion, and are in the high road to apostacy. There are not wanting instances of such having returned with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that washed to her wallowing in the mire. Others have been made signal monuments of judgment, and set up as beacons to backsliders. And some who have had the root of the matter in them, have had such a storm raised in their consciences, as has made them a terror to themselves, and all around them; and it has cost them much and sore wrestling with God ere they recovered the light of his countenance. For the Lord's sake, then, and your own soul's sake, be frequent in this exercise, and grown not remiss therein, lest ye feel the vengeance of God's temple.

Exhort. 3. To parents and masters of families. I beseech and entreat you, by the mercies of God, by the love ye bear to the Lord Jesus, and the regard ye have to the souls of your children and servants, not only to pray in secret yourselves, but by all the means that are competent to you, by command, advice, exhortation, &c. to stir them up to this duty of secret prayer. For motives consider,

1. It was the practice of John the Baptist, yea, and of Christ himself, the great Prophet of the church, Luke 11:1. Thus this duty comes recommended by the best authority, and the most excellent approved patterns. Christ taught and urges his disciples to pray, and for that end gave them an excellent directory, suited to their then state; and which ye would do well to make your rule in instructing your children and servants.

2. God expressly commands it, Deuteronomy 6:7. 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the

way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Thus they were to be daily employed in this duty, not only to let their children know what they were bound to do, but to press them to the performance of it. And this command being of moral obligation, is equally incumbent upon you that are Christian parents and masters of families; and ye have far superior advantages for this exercise than the Israelites had, a small part of the bible having been then written; whereas ye have the whole of it among your hands.

3. God commends the practice in Abraham, Genesis 18:19. 'I know him,' says Jehovah, 'that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Thus, if thou make conscience of this duty, thou wilt tread in the steps of the father of the faithful, and receive tokens of the divine approbation, by the Lord's blessing thy family, and prospering thy outward concerns, and be an example to others to excite them to their duty. This will be the ready way to have dutiful and affectionate children, and obedient and careful servants.

4. Consider the engagements which thou tookest on thee at the baptism of the children, to train them up in the good and holy ways of the Lord; to inform them of their natural depravity, impotency, and aversion to what is good, of the method of salvation by the obedience and death of Christ; and to press them to yield themselves to the Lord, by taking hold of his covenant by faith. Thou became then engaged to instruct them in the principles of our holy religion, to show them their duty to God and man, and to observe his ordinances and commandments. And canst thou fulfil these thy engagements, unless thou be at pains to instruct them, and especially to stir them up to the practice of secret prayer.

5. Their souls are committed to thy charge; and if they perish through thy neglect, their blood will be required at thy hand. Ah! my friends, Papists and others will rise up in judgment against you, who take more pains on their children, to breed them up in their false and corrupt doctrines, and their idolatrous and superstitious courses, than ye to instruct them in the pure doctrines and precepts of religion. If thou now neglect their religious education and instruction, thy lost children and servants shall curse the day that ever they saw thy face, who tookest no more care of them than of thy beasts. Oh! let this melancholy consideration excite and stir thee up to thy duty now, lest thy children and servants rise up in judgment against thee, and be dreadful addition to thy condemnation.

What shall we do then? may ye say.

1.. As soon as they can speak perfectly, give them a few words to speak to God upon their knees every morning and evening, and see that they do so. Let these words consist of a short confession of sin, an acknowledgment of God's goodness in preservation, and an application for pardon through the blood of Jesus.

2. When they advance father in years, give them the help of a form, composed chiefly in scripture words, and particularly that which Christ taught his disciples. And be sure to vary and enlarge any form you give them, for time to time; and in a little time, by reading the bible, and duly considering their own case and wants, they will be able to pray without a set form; for it is often observed, that where young ones make conscience of practising the helps that are given them, and take pleasure in the duty, the Holy Spirit strikes in with his assistance, and lays suitable matter of prayer before

them; so that even some very young persons have been found to pray with great fluency and fervour, to the admiration of those who happened to overhear them.

3.. Pray frequently with your children; which will be an excellent means to instruct them both as to the matter and manner of the duty, and have a powerful influence upon them to induce them to pray for themselves. And indeed I must say, if parents made more conscience of this practice, in praying with their children, the young ones would not discover such aversion to the duty as many do; nor would there be such a numerous fry of young prayerless sinners among us, who, though they have not learned to pray, yet are great proficients in speaking vain and idle words, and in cursing and swearing.

4. Furnish them daily with proper materials of prayer, which ye can extract from the Lord's word, your own observation of the state and temper of your souls, the disposition and inclination of your children, the sins and vanities they are most addicted to, your knowledge of their peculiar wants and desires, and what appears to be suitable to their circumstances and situation.

5. Carefully observe, whether they perform this duty or not; that you may encourage them when they do well, and check and rebuke them when they neglect it. Show them that you are influenced by a regard to the command and authority of God, and are actuated with a hearty zeal and concern for the salvation of their souls, in all you do in this matter, whether respecting the encouragements and advices you give them, or the rebukes and chastisements you administer to them, in case of non-compliance, neglect, or careless performance of the duty enjoined. This will have no small influence upon them to comply with your instructions and directions, and by degrees conquer their aversion to the exercise; and you may come, through the divine blessing, to see the happy fruit of your labours and endeavours.

Chapter 60

05.16. The Only Rule Which God Hath Given to Direct His People In Their Prayers to Him

The Only Rule Which God

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People In Their Prayers To Him

First, There is a general rule given us for that end; and that is the whole word of God, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in which God's will is revealed, as to all things to be believed or done by us,' John 5:14. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' By our bible we may learn to pray; for there we are furnished with all sorts of helps and directions for this duty, as to matter, manner, and words; and therefore it is a complete directory for prayer.

1. It furnishes us abundantly with matter of prayer, in all the parts of it, petition, confession, &c. Psalms 51:4-5. 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me;' Php 4:6. 'Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' And whoso has the word of God dwelling richly in him, will not want of matter for prayer, for himself or for others. There is a storehouse of it there, of great variety; and we are welcome to the use of it, agreeable to our own case.

2. It fully directs us as to the manner of prayer: as, for instance, that we must pay with sincerity, Hebrews 10:22. 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled for an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;' with humility, Psalms 10:17. 'Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear;' in faith, James 1:6; and with fervency, James 5:16. 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.' And there is no qualification necessary in prayer, but what we may learn from the holy word.

3. It furnishes us with the most fit words to be used in prayer. Do ye want words to express your desires before the Lord? He has given us his own words in the bible, that we may use them according to our needs, Hosea 14:2. 'Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.'

Secondly, There is a special rule given us by Jesus Christ for that end, namely, that from of words which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called 'The Lord's prayer;' that excellent pattern and example of prayer, composed by Jesus Christ himself for our direction, which every Christian is obliged to receive with the utmost reverence, as the Lord's own word. But it was never imposed by Jesus Christ, or his apostles, as a set form to which his church is bound to pray in these very

words, and no other. It is true, in the year 618, the Council of Toledo imposed it on the clergy, under the pain of deposition; but then Antichrist had mounted the throne, and the Papists since have superstitiously abused it to this day. I would all Protestants could plead, Not Guilty. To clear this matter,

1. The Lord's prayer is given us as a directory for prayer, a pattern and an example, by which we are to regulate our petitions, and make other prayers by. This is clear from the text, After this manner pray ye,&c. And it is a most ample directory in few words, to be eyed by all praying persons, if studied and understood. There we are taught to pray in a known tongue, and without vain repetitions, to God only, and for things allowed; to have chief respect to the glory of God and our own advantage.

2. It may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other praying graces. So we own the very words may lawfully be used, Matthew 6:9. compared with Luke 11:2. See Larger Catechism, quest. 187. and the Directory for Public Worship, under the title, Of prayer after Sermon, para. 5. Who can refuse this, since it is a piece of holy scripture, of the Lord's own word? And they who are so weak, as that they cannot conceive prayer, do well to use this holy form; though they should endeavour to make further progress in prayer. And sometimes knowing Christians, under great desertions, not able to conceive prayer, have used it with good success. But, 3. Our Lord hath not tied us to this very form of words when we pray to God. This is evident,

(1.) Because the prayers afterwards recorded in the scripture, were neither this form of words, nor yet concluded with it. Christ himself used it not in his prayer at Lazarus's grave, John 11:41; nor in his last prayer, John 17:1-26. Nor did his apostles, Acts 1:24; nor the Church, Acts 4:24. &c.

(2.) This prayer is diversely set down by Matthew and Luke, the only two evangelists that make mention of it. And though it is obvious, that there is an entire harmony between them, as to the matter and sense of the words; yet it is equally obvious to all who compare them together, that there is some difference as to mode or manner of expression, particularly as to the fourth and fifth petitions; which certainly there would not have been, had it been designed for a form of prayer. In Luke, the fourth petition runs thus, 'Give us day by day our daily bread;' but in Matthew, it is thus expressed, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' The latter contains a petition for the supply of present wants; and the former for the supply of wants as they daily recur upon us: so that both accounts being compared together, we are directed to pray for those temporal blessings which we want at present, and for a supply of those we stand in need of as they daily recur: which shows a considerable difference in the expressions. In Luke the fifth petition is, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us;' whereas, in Matthew the expression is very different, viz. 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' Again, Luke leaves out the doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen;' which Matthew adds. From whence it may be justly inferred, that our Lord's design in furnishing his disciples with this prayer, was not that they should confine themselves solely to the manner of expression used therein, without the least variation; for then undoubtedly the two evangelists would have recorded it in the very same words; but he rather intended it as a directory respecting the matter of prayer. So that it is impossible to keep by the form of words precisely, since it is not one. It is said, Luke 11:2. 'When ye pray, say, &c. Here we are tied to the form of words, say our adversaries. Ans. By this phrase is

to be understood the manner, viz. Say this on the matter, pray after this manner. Compare Matthew 6:9. If it is to be understood otherwise, then, (1) According to Matthew 10:7. 'Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand;' the disciples preaching was confined to these very words, which we are sure it was not. (2) It would be unlawful to pray in any other words, which no Christian dare assert. (3) Neither Papists nor Episcopalians stick to these words in Luke, but use the words in Matthew; by which they give up the cause.

Further, it may be observed, that our Saviour chiefly intended this prayer as a directory, respecting the matter of our petitions, rather than a form; because it does not explicitly contain all the parts of prayer, particularly confession of sin, and thankful acknowledgment of mercies. Again, there is no explicit or direct mention of the Mediator, in whose name we are to pray; nor of his obedience, sufferings, and intercession, on which the efficacy of our prayers is founded, and their success depends: which things are to be supplied from other parts of scripture; all which, taken together, give us a complete directory for prayer. From the whole, I think it is evident, that a prayer formed upon the model of this excellent pattern, having the substance of the several petitions interspersed through it, though expressed in other words, is a true scriptural prayer; and that there is no necessity to conclude with the Lord's prayer. And therefore, I cannot but think, that Papists, and many Protestants, who conclude their prayers with the very words of the Lord's prayer, make a very superstitious use of it; causing people imagine, that the bare recital of the words of the Lord's prayer sanctifies their other prayers; and that no prayer can be accepted of God where this, I cannot but call it vain, repetition is omitted.*

*There is a use of words in prayer, to excite and convey, and give vent to affection, Hosea 14:2. 'Take with you words and turn to the Lord, and say, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.' Now these may be considered either when we are alone, or in company.

1. When we are alone. Here take the advice of the Holy Ghost, Ecclesiastes 5:2. 'God is in heaven, and thou art upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.' Few in weight, affecting rather to speak matter than words. Few in conscience. Pray neither too short nor too long; do it not merely to lengthen out the prayer, or as counting the better for being long. Few with reverence, and managed with that gravity, awfulness, and seriousness, as would become an address to God.

2. In company. There our words must be apt and orderly, moving as much as may be not to God but to the hearers; managed with such reverence and seriousness as may suit with the gravity of the duty; conceiving aright of God, particularly that He is, and that He is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Dr. Manton on the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 61

05.17. Directions To Aid Us In Forming Right Notions Of God As A Spirit,

Directions To Aid Us In Forming Right Notions Of God As A Spirit, Infinitely Pure And Perfect

1. That God has no body nor bodily parts. Object. How then are eyes, ears, hands, face and the like, attributed in scripture to God? Ans. They are attributed to him not properly, but figuratively; they are spoken of him after the manner of men, in condescension to our weakness; but we are to understand them after a sort becoming the Divine Majesty. We are to consider what such bodily parts serve us for, as our eyes for discerning and knowing, our arms for strength, our hands for action, &c. and we are to conceive these things to be in God infinitely, which these parts serve for in us. Thus, when eyes and ears are ascribed to God they signify his omniscience; his hands denote his power, and his face the manifestation of his love and favour.

2. That God is invisible, and cannot be seen with the eyes of the body, no not in heaven; for the glorified body is still a body, and God a Spirit, which is not object of the eyes, more than sound, taste, smell, &c. 1 Timothy 1:17. 'Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

3. That God is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits; and can communicate himself, and apply those things to them, which only can render them happy, as he is the God and Father of our spirits.

4. That it is sinful and dishonourable to God, either to make images or pictures of him without us, or to have any image of him in our minds, which our unruly imagination is apt to frame to itself, especially in prayer. For God is the object of our understanding, not of our imagination. God expressly prohibited Israel to frame any similitude or resemblance of him, and tells them, that they had not the least pretence for so doing, inasmuch as they 'saw reb,' Deuteronomy 4:12, Deuteronomy 15:1-16. And, says the prophet, 'To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' Isaiah 40:18. We cannot form an imaginary idea of our own souls or spirits, which are absolutely invisible to us, and far less of him who is the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see. Therefore to frame a picture or an idea of what is invisible, is highly absurd and impracticable; nay, it is gross idolatry, prohibited in the second commandment.

5. That externals in worship are of little value with God, who is a spirit, and requires the heart. They who would be accepted of God must worship him in spirit and in truth, that is, from an apprehension and saving knowledge of what he is in Christ to poor sinners. And this saving knowledge of God in Christ is attainable in this life: for it is the matter of the divine promise, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord,' Jeremiah 24:7. 'It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God, John 6:45. And therefore it should be most earnestly and assiduously sought after by us, as unless we attain to it, we must perish for ever. That we may know what sort of a spirit God is, we must consider his attributes, which we gather from his word and works, and that two ways: 1. By denying of, and removing from God, in our minds, all

imperfection which is in the creatures, 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.' And thus we come to the knowledge of his incommunicable attributes, so called because there is no shadow or vestige of them in the creatures, such as infinity, eternity, unchangeableness. 2. By attributing unto him, by way of eminency, whatever is excellent in the creatures, seeing he is the fountain of all perfection in them, Psalms 94:9. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?' And thus we have his communicable attributes, whereof there are some vestiges and small scantlings in the creature, as being, wisdom, power, &c. amongst which his spirituality is to be reckoned.

Now, both these sorts of attributes in God are not qualities in him distinct from himself, but they are God himself. God's infinity is God himself; his wisdom is himself; he is wisdom, goodness, 1 John 1:5. 'This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' Neither are these attributes so many different things in God; but they are cach of them God himself: for God swears by himself, Hebrews 6:13. 'For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;' yet he swears by his holiness, Amos 4:2. 'The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks.' He creates by himself, Isaiah 44:24. 'Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; yet he creates by his power, Romans 1:20. Therefore God's attributes are God himself. Neither are these attributes separable from one another; for though we, through weakness, must think and speak of them separately, yet they are all truly but the one infinite perfection of the divine nature, which cannot be separated therefrom, without denying that he is an infinitely perfect Being.

05.18. In what God's attribute of Wisdom is gloriously

In What God’s Attribute Of Wisdom Is Gloriously Displayed.

1. In the works of creation. The universe is a bright mirror, wherein the wisdom of God may be clearly seen. ’The Lord by wisdom made the heavens,’ Psalms 136:5. ’The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,’ Proverbs 3:19. ’He hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.’ More particularly, the wisdom of God appears, (1.) In the vast variety of creatures which he hath made. Hence the Psalmist cries out, ’How manifold are thy works, O Lord? in wisdom hast thou made them all,’ Psalms 104:24. (2.) In the admirable and beautiful order and situation of the creatures. God hath marshalled every thing in its proper place and sphere. For instance, the sun, by its position displays the infinite wisdom of its Creator. It is placed in the midst of the planets, to enlighten them with its brightness, and inflame them with its heat, and thereby derive to them such benign qualities as make them beneficial to all mixed bodies. If it were raised as high as the stars, the earth would lose its prolific virtue, and remain a dead carcase for want of its quickening heat; and if it were placed as low as the moon, the air would be inflamed with its excessive heat, the waters would be dried up, and every plant scorched. But at the due distance at which it is placed, it purifies the air, abates the superfluities of the waters, temperately warms the earth, and so serves all the purposes of life and vegetation. It could not be in another position without the disorder and hurt of universal nature. Again, the expansion of the air from the ethereal heavens to the earth is another testimony of divine wisdom: for it is transparent and of a subtile nature, and so fit medium to convey light and celestial influences to this lower world. Moreover, the situation of the earth doth also trumpet forth the infinite wisdom of its Divine Maker: for it is as it were the pavement of the world, and placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter. (3.) In fitting every thing for its proper end and use, so that nothing is unprofitable and useless. After the most diligent and accurate inquiry into the works of God, there is nothing to be found superfluous, and there is nothing defective. (4.) In the subordination of all its parts, to one common end. Though they are of different natures, as lines vastly distant in themselves, yet they all meet in one common centre, namely, the good and preservation of the whole, Hosea 2:21-22. ’I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.’

2. In the government of the world. God sits in his secret place, surrounded with clouds and darkness, holding the rudder of the world in his hand, and steering its course through all the floatings and tossings of casualty and contingency to his own appointed ends. There he grasps and turns the great engine of nature, fastening one pin and loosing another, moving and removing the several wheels of it, and framing the whole according to the eternal idea of his own understanding. By his governing providence he directs all the actions of his creatures; and, by the secret and efficacious penetration of the divine influence, he powerfully sways and determines them which way he pleases.

3. In the work of redemption. This is the very masterpiece of Divine wisdom; and here shines the manifold or diversified wisdom of God, Ephesians 3:10. It appears, (1.) In the contrivance thereof. When man had ruined himself by sin, all the wisdom of men and angels could never have devised a method for his recovery. Heaven seemed to be divided upon this awful event. Mercy inclined to save man, but Justice interposed for satisfaction. Justice pleaded the law and the curse, by which the souls of sinners are forfeited to vengeance. Mercy, on the other hand, urged, Shall the Almighty build a glorious work, and suffer it to lie in eternal ruins? Shall the most excellent creature in the inferior world perish through the subtilty of a malicious and rebellious spirit? Shall that arch-rebel triumph for ever, and raise his trophies from the final ruin of the works of the Most High? Shall the reasonable creature lose the fruition of God, and God lose the subjection and service of his creature? And, shall all mankind be made in vain? Mercy further pleaded, That if the rigorous demands of Justice be heard, it must lie an obscure and unregarded attribute in the divine essence for ever; that it alone must be excluded, while all the rest of the attributes had their share of honour. Thus the case was infinitely difficult, and not to be unraveled by the united wit of all the celestial spirits. A bench of angels was incapable to contrive a method of reconciling infinite mercy with inflexible justice, of satisfying the demands of the one, and granting the requests of the other. In this hard exigence the wisdom of God interposed, and in the vast treasure of its incomprehensible lights, found out an admirable expedient to save man without prejudice to the other divine perfections. The pleas of Justice, said the wisdom of God, shall be satisfied in punishment, and the requests of Mercy shall be granted in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor Mercy for want of compassion; I will have an infinite sacrifice to content Justice, and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight Mercy. Here Justice shall have punishment to accept, and Mercy shall have pardon to bestow. My Son shall die, and satisfy Justice by his death; and by the virtue and merit of that sacrifice sinners shall be received into favour, and herein Mercy shall triumph and be glorified. Here was the most glorious display of wisdom. (2.) In the ordination of a Mediator every way fitly qualified to reconcile men unto God. A Mediator must be capable of the sentiments and affections of both the parties he is to reconcile, and a just esteemer of the rights and injuries of the one and the other, and have a common interest in both. The Son of God, by his incarnation, perfectly possesses all these qualities. He hath a nature to please God, and a nature to please sinners. He had both the perfections of the Deity, and all the qualities and sinless infirmities of the humanity. The one fitted him for things pertaining to God, and the other furnished him with a sense of the infirmities of man. This union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ was necessary to fit and qualify him for the discharge of his threefold office of prophet, priest, and King. As a prophet, it was requisite he should be God, that so he might acquaint us with his Father’s will, and reveal the secret purposes and hidden counsels of heaven concerning our salvation, which were locked up in the bosom of God from all eternity. And it was needful he should be man, that he might converse with poor sinners in a familiar manner, and convey the mind and counsels of God to them, in such a way as they could receive them. As a Priest, he behoved to be a man, that so he might be capable to suffer, and to bear the wrath which the sins of the elect had justly deserved. And it behoved him to be God, to render his temporary sufferings satisfactory. The great dignity and excellency of the divine Mediator’s person made his sufferings of infinite value in God’s account. Though he only suffered as a man, yet he satisfied as God. As a King, he must be God, to conquer Satan, convert an elect world, and effectually subdue the lusts and corruptions of men. And he must be man, that

by the excellency of his example, he might lead us in the way of life. (3.) In the manner whereby this redemption is accomplished, namely, by the humiliation of the Son of God. By this he counteracted the sin of angels and men. Pride is the poison of every sin: for in every transgression the creature prefers his pleasure to and sets up his own will above God's. This was the special sin of Adam. The devil would have levelled heaven by an unpardonable usurpation. He said in his heart, I will be like the Most High; and man, infected with his breath (when he said, Ye shall be like gods), became sick of the same disease. Now the Divine Redeemer, that he might cure our disease in its source and cause by the quality of the remedy, applied to our pride an unspeakable humility. Man was guilty of the highest robbery in affecting to be equal with God; and the Son, who was in the bosom of God, and equal to him in majesty and authority, emptied himself by assuming the human nature in its servile state, Php 2:6-8. It is said, John 1:14. 'The word was made flesh.' The meanest part of our nature is specified to signify the greatness of his abasement. There is such an infinite distance between God and flesh, that the condescension is as admirable as the contrivance. So great was the malignity of human pride, that such a profound humility was requisite for the cure of it. And by this Christ destroyed the works of the devil. (4.) In appointing such contemptible, and in appearance opposite means, to bring about such glorious effects. The way is as admirable as the work. Christ ruined the devil's empire by the very same nature that he had vanquished, and by the very means which he had made use of to establish and confirm it. He took not upon him the nature of angels, which is equal to Satan in strength and power; but he took part of flesh and blood, that he might the more signally triumph over that proud spirit in the human nature, which was inferior to his, and had been vanquished by him in paradise. For this end he did not immediately exercise omnipotent power to destroy him, but managed our weakness to foil the roaring lion. He did not enter the lists with Satan in the glory of his Deity, but disguised under the human nature which was subject to mortality. And thus the devil was overcome in the same nature over which he first got the victory. For as the whole race of mankind was captivated by him in Adam the representative, so believers are made victorious over him by the conquest which their representative obtained in the whole course of his sufferings. As our ruin was effected by the subtilty of Satan, so our recovery is wrought by the wisdom of God, who takes the wise in their own craftiness. Thus eternal life springs from death, glory from ignominy, and blessedness from a curse. We are healed by stripes, quickened by death, purchased by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honour by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty. Thus the wisdom of God shines with a radiant brightness in the work of redemption.

05.19. In What God's Attribute Of Power Is Gloriously

In What God’s Attribute Of Power Is Gloriously Displayed

1. In the creation of the world, Romans 1:20. ’For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.’ O how great must that power be, which produced the beautiful fabric of the universe, without the concurrence of any material cause! This proclaims it to be truly infinite: for nothing less could make such distant extremes as nothing and being to meet together. All this was done by a word, one simple act of his will; for ’he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast,’ Psalms 33:9.

2. In the preservation of the world, and all things therein. He ’upholdeth all things by the word of his power,’ Hebrews 1:3. He preserves all the creatures in their proper place, for their proper use and end. It is by the Divine Power that the heavenly bodies have constantly rolled about in their spheres for so many ages, without wearing or moving out of their proper course; and that the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order to this very day. He preserves the confederacies of nature, sets bounds to the raging sea, and keeps it within its limits by a girdle of sand. He is the powerful Preserver of man and beast. He preserves them in their kind and species, by the constant succession of them one after another; so that, though the individuals perish yet the species continues. O what a mighty power must that be that sustains so many creatures, sets bounds to the raging sea, holds the wind in his fists, and preserves a comely order and sweet harmony among all the creatures!

3. In the government of the world. He is the supreme Rector of the universe, and manages all things, so that they contribute to the advancement of his own glory, and the advantage of his people. By his governing providence he directs all the actions and motions of his creatures, and powerfully determines them which way soever he pleases. All the creatures are called his host, because he marshals them as an army to serve his important purposes. The whole system of nature is ready to favour and act for men when he commands it, and it is ready to punish them when he gives it a commission. Thus he checked the Red Sea, and it obeyed his voice, Psalms 106:9. Its rapid motion quickly ceased, and the fluid waters were immediately ranged as defensive walls to secure the march of his people. At the command of God, the sea again recovered its wonted violence, and the watery walls came tumbling down upon the heads of the proud Egyptian oppressor and his host. The sea so exactly obeyed its orders, that not one Israelite was drowned, and not one Egyptian was saved alive. More particularly, the power of God appears in the moral government of the world.

(1.) In governing and ordering the hearts of men, so that they are not masters of their own affections, but often act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved and purposed. Of which we have eminent instances in Esau and Balaam. He hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them what way he pleases. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favour the Israelites, by sending them away with great riches given them by way of loan. He turned Jehoshaphat’s

enemies from him when they came with a purpose to destroy him, 2 Chronicles 18:31. 'And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel; therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him: and God moved them to depart from him.'

(2.) In governing and managing the most stubborn creatures, as devils and wicked men. First, In his governing devils. They have great power, and are full of malice. The devil is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We could have no quiet nor safety in the world, if his power were not restrained, and his malice curbed by one that is mightier than the infernal fiend. He would turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities and houses, and plunder us of all the supports of life, if he were not held in a chain by the Omnipotent Governor of the world. But God overmasters his strength, so that he cannot move one hair's breadth beyond his tether. God has all the devils chained, and he governs all their motions. The devil could not touch Job in his person and goods without the divine permission; nor could he enter into the Gadarene swine without a special licence. If we consider the great malice of these invisible enemies, and the vast extent of their power, we will easily see that there could be no safety or security for men, if they were not curbed and restrained by a superior power. Second, In governing wicked men. All the imaginations of their hearts are evil, and only evil continually. They are fully bent upon mischief, and drink iniquity like water. What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury world triumph in the world, and run with a rapid violence, if the Divine Power did not interpose to bear down the flood gates of it? Human society would be rooted up, the whole world drenched in blood, and all things would run into a sea of confusion, if God did not bridle and restrain the lusts and corruptions of men. The king of Assyria triumphed much in his design against Jerusalem; but how did God govern and manage that wild ass! Isaiah 37:29. 'I will put my hook into thy nose, (says Jehovah), and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.' And we are told, Psalms 56:10. that 'the very wrath of man shall praise him, and that he will restrain the remainder of wrath.'

(3.) In raising up a church to himself in spite of all his enemies. This is specially seen in founding the New Testament church, and propagating the gospel through the world. The power of God appears admirable in planting the gospel, and converting the world to Christianity. For there were many and great difficulties in the way, as gross and execrable idolatry; and the nations were strongly confirmed and rooted in their idolatry, being trained up and inured to it from their infant state. It was as hard to make the Gentiles forsake there religion which they received from their birth, as to make the Africans change their skin, and the leopard his spots. The Pagan religion was derived from their progenitors through a long succession of ages. Hence the heathens accused the Christian religion of novelty, and urged nothing more plausibly than the argument of immemorial prescription for their superstition. They would not consider whether it was just and reasonable, but with a blind deference yielded up themselves to the authority of the ancients. The pomp of the Pagan worship was very pleasing to the flesh; the magnificence of their temples, adorned with the trophies of superstition, their mysterious ceremonies, their music, their processions, their images and altars, their sacrifices and purifications, and the rest of the equipage of a carnal religion, drew their respects and strongly affected their minds through their senses. Whereas the religion of the gospel is spiritual and serious, holy and pure, and hath nothing to move the carnal part. There was then an universal depravation of manners among men; the whole

earth was covered with abominations: the most unnatural lusts had lost the fear and shame that naturally attends them. We may see a melancholy picture of their most abandoned conversation, Romans 1. The powers of the world were bent against the gospel. The heathen philosophers strongly opposed it. When Paul preached at Athens, the Epicureans and Stoics entertained him with scorn and derision; 'What will this babbler say?' said they. The heathen priests conspired to obstruct it. The princes of the world thought themselves obliged to prevent the introduction of a new religion, lest their empire should be in hazard, or the greatness and majesty of it impaired thereby. if we consider the means by which the gospel was propagated, the Divine power will evidently appear. The persons employed in this great work were a few illiterate fishermen, with a publican and a tentmaker, without authority and power to force men to obedience, and without the charms of eloquence to enforce the belief of the doctrines which they taught. yet this doctrine prevailed, and the gospel had wonderful success through all the parts of the then known world, and that against all the power and policy of men and devils. Now, how could this possibly be, without a mighty operation of the power of God upon the hearts of men?

(4.) In preserving, defending, and supporting his church under the most terrible tempests of trouble and persecution which were raised against her. This is promised by our blessed Saviour, Matthew 16:18. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The most flourishing monarchies have decayed and wasted, and the strongest kingdoms have been broken in pieces; yet the church hath been preserved to this very day, notwithstanding all the subtle and potent enemies which in all ages have been pushing at her. Yea, God has preserved and delivered his church in the greatest extremities, when the danger in all human appearance was unavoidable; as in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in Esther's days, when a bloody decree was issued to slay all the Jews. Yea, God hath sometimes delivered his church by very weak and contemptible-like instruments, such as Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron, a poor captive in it; and sometimes by very unlikely means, as when he smote Egypt with armies of locusts and lice. In all ages of the world God has gloriously displayed his power in the preservation of his church and people, notwithstanding all the rage, power, and malice of their enemies.

(5.) In the conversion of the elect. Hence the gospel, which is the means and instrument of conversion, is called the power of God, and the rod of his strength; and the day of the success of the gospel in turning sinners to Christ, is called the day of his power, Psalms 110:2. O what a mighty power must that be that stills the waves of a tempestuous sea, quells the lusts and stubbornness of the heart, demolishes the strong holds of sin in the soul, routs all the armies of corrupt nature, and makes the obstinate rebellious will strike sail to Christ! The power of God that is exerted here makes a man to think on other objects, and speak in another strain, than he did before. O how admirable is it, that carnal reason should be thus silenced; that legions of devils should be thus driven out; and that men should part with those sins which before they esteemed their chiefest ornaments, and stand at defiance with all the charming allurements and bitter discouragements of the world? The same power that raised Christ from the grave is exerted in the conversion of a sinner, Ephesians 1:19-20. There is greater power exerted in this case than there was in the creation of the world. For when God made the world, he met with no opposition: he spake the word, and it was done: but when he comes to convert a sinner, he meets with all the opposition which the devil and a corrupt heart can make against him. God wrought but one miracle in the creation: he spake the word and it was done; but there are many miracles wrought in

conversion. The blind is made to see, the dead raised, and the deaf hears the voice of the Son of God. O the infinite power of Jehovah! In this work the mighty arm of the Lord is revealed.

(6.) In perserving the souls of believers amidst the many dangers to which they are exposed, and bringing them safely to glory at last. They have many enemies without, a legion of subtle and powerful devils, and a wicked and ensnaring world, with all its allurements and temptations; and they have many strong lusts and corruptions within; and their graces are but weak, and in their infancy and minority, while they are here: So that it may justly be matter of wonder how they are preserved. But the apostle tells us, that they 'are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 1 Peter 1:5. Indwelling corruption would soon quench grace in their hearts, if it were not kept alive by a Divine power. But Christ hath pledged his faithfulness for it, that they shall be kept secure, John 10:28. It is his power that, moderates the violence of temptations, supports his people under them, defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under their feet.

(4.) Lastly, The power of God appears gloriously in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. Hence in scripture Christ is called the power as well as the wisdom of God. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world. More particularly,

(1.) The power of God shines in Christ's miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin. The power of the Highest did overshadow her, Luke 1:35, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin's body, and united it to the Divinity. This was foretold many ages before as the effect of the divine power. When Judah was oppressed by two potent kings, and despaired of any escape and deliverance to raise their drooping spirits, the prophet tells them, that he would give them a sign; and a wonderful one it was. Therefore it is said 'Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel,' Isaiah 7:14. The argument is from the greater to the less: For if God will accomplish that stupendous and unheard-of wonder, much more will he rescue his people from the fury of their adversaries.

(2.) In uniting the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, and that without any confusion of the two natures, or changing the one into the other. The two natures of Christ are not mixed together, as liquors that incorporate with one another, when poured into the same vessel. The divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the divine. One nature doth not swallow up another, and make a their distinct from both. But they are distinct, and yet united: conjoined, and yet unmixed: the properties of each nature are preserved entire. O what a wonder of power was here! that two natures, a divine and a human, infinitely distant in themselves, should meet together in a personal conjunction! Here one equal with God is found in the form of a servant; here God and man are united in one; the Creator and the creature are miraculously allied in the same subsistence. Here a God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows. That is an admirable expression, 'The Word was made flesh,' John 1:14. What can be more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God? that a person possessed of all the perfections and excellencies of the Deity should inherit all the infirmities and imperfections of humanity, sin only excepted? Was there not need of infinite power, to bring together terms which were so far asunder? Nothing less than an omnipotent power could effect and bring about what an infinite and incomprehensible wisdom did project in this matter.

(3.) In supporting the human nature of Christ, and keeping it from sinking under the terrible weight of divine wrath that came upon him for our sins, and making him victorious over the devil and all

the powers of darkness. His human nature could not possibly have borne up under the wrath of God and the curse of the law, nor held out under such fearful contests with the powers of hell and the world, if it had not been upheld by infinite power. Hence his Father says concerning him, Isaiah 42:1. 'Behold my Servant whom I uphold.'

(4.) The Divine power did evidently appear in raising Christ from the dead. The apostle tells us, that God exerted his mighty power in Christ when he raised him from the dead, Ephesians 1:19. The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonah, the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions, and restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of the Divine power, and types of the resurrection of our Redeemer. But all these are nothing to what is represented by them: for that was a power over natural causes, and curbing of beasts and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, that was hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces: he unlocked the prison doors wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the belly and ribs of a leviathan. How admirable was it, that he should be raised from under the curse of the law, and the infinite weight of our sins, and brought forth with success and glory after his sharp encounter with the powers of hell! In this the power of God was gloriously manifested. Hence he is said to be raised from the dead 'by the glory of the Father,' i.e. by his glorious power; and 'declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,' Romans 1:4. All the miraculous proofs by which God acknowledge him for his Son during his life, had been ineffectual without this. If he had remained in the grave, it had been reasonable to believe him only an ordinary person, and that his death had been the just punishment of his presumption in calling himself the Son of God. But his resurrection from the dead was the most illustrious and convincing evidence, that really he was what he declared himself to be.

05.20. In what God's glorious attribute of holiness

In What God’s Glorious Attribute Of Holiness Is Manifested

1. In his word; and that both in the precepts and promises thereof, God manifested his hatred and detestation of sin, even in a variety of sacrifices under the ceremonial law; and the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, were a clear proof that every thing that had a resemblance to evil was loathsome to God. All the legal sacrifices, washings, and purifications, were designed to express what an evil sin is, and how hateful and abominable it is to him. But the holiness of God is most remarkably expressed in the moral law. Hence the law is said to be holy, Romans 7:12. It is a true transcript of the holiness of God. And it is holy in its precepts. It requires an exact, perfect, and complete holiness in the whole man, in every faculty of the soul, and in every member of the body. It is holy in its prohibitions. It forbids and condemns all impurity and filthiness whatsoever. It discharges not only sinful words and actions, gross and atrocious crimes, and profane, blasphemous, and unprofitable speeches, but all sinful thoughts and irregular motions of the heart. Hence is that exhortation, Jeremiah 4:14. ’O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?’ It is holy in its threatenings. All these have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are a branch of this essential perfection. All the terrible threatenings annexed to the law are declarations of the holiness and purity of God, and of his infinite hatred and detestation of sin.

Again, the holiness of God appears in the promises of the word. They are called holy promises, Psalms 105:42. and they are designed to promote and encourage true holiness. Hence, says the apostle, 2 Corinthians 7:1. ’Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.’ By them we are ’made partakers of a divine nature,’ 2 Peter 1:4.

2. The holiness of God is manifested in his works. Hence the Psalmist saith, ’The Lord is holy in all his works,’ Psalms 145:17. More particularly,

(1.) The divine holiness appears in the creation of man. Solomon tells us, Ecclesiastes 7:29. that ’God made man upright;’ and Moses says, that he was ’made after the image of God,’ Genesis 1:28. Now, the image of God in man consists chiefly in holiness. Therefore the new man is said to be ’created after God in righteousness and true holiness,’ Ephesians 4:24. Adam was made with a perfection of grace. There was an entire and universal rectitude in all its faculties, disposing them to their proper operations. There was no disorder among his affections, but a perfect agreement between the flesh and the spirit; and they both joined in the service of God. He fully obeyed the first and great command, of loving the Lord with all his soul and strength, and his love to other things was regulated by his love to God. When Adam dropt from the creating finger of God, he had knowledge in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections. There was such a harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Here then was a

display of the Divine purity.

2. In the works of Providence: particularly in his judicial proceedings against sinners for the violation of his holy and righteous laws. All the fearful judgments which have been poured down upon sinners, spring from God's holiness and hatred of sin. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. All diseases and sicknesses, wars, pestilence, plagues, and famines, are designed to vindicate God's holiness and hatred of sin. And therefore, when God had smitten the two sons of Aaron for offering strange fire, he says, 'I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified,' Leviticus 10:3. He glorified himself in declaring by that act, before all the people, that he is a holy God, that cannot endure sin and disobedience. More particularly,

[1.] God's holiness and hatred of sin is clearly manifested in his punishing the angels that sinned. It is said, 2 Peter 2:4. 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.' Neither their mighty numbers, nor the nobility of their natures, could incline their offended Sovereign to spare them; they were immediately turned out of heaven, and expelled from the Divine presence. Their case is hopeless and helpless; no mercy will ever be shown to one of them, being under the blackness of darkness for ever.

[2.] In the punishment threatened and inflicted on man for his first apostacy from God. Man in his first state was the friend and favourite of heaven; by his extraction and descent he was the Son of God, a little lower than the angels; consecrated and crowned for the service of his Maker, and appointed as king over the inferior world; he was placed in paradise, the garden of God, and admitted to fellowship and communion with him. But sin hath divested him of all his dignity and glory. By his rebellion against his Creator, he made a forfeiture of his dominion, and so lost the obedience of the sensible creatures, and the service of the insensible. He was thrust out of paradise, banished from the presence of God, and debarred from fellowship and communion with him. God immediately sentenced him and all his posterity to misery, death, and ruin. This is a clear demonstration of the infinite purity and holiness of God. But blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away.

[3.] In executing terrible and strange judgments upon sinners. It was for sin that God drowned the old world with a deluge of water, rained hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and made the earth open her mouth, and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It was for sin that God brought terrible destroying judgments upon Jerusalem. All calamities and judgments spring from this bitter root, as sword, pestilence, distempers of body, perplexities of mind, poverty, reproach, and disgrace, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men. All this shows how hateful sin is to God.

[4.] In punishing sins seemingly small with great and heavy judgments. A multitude of angels were sent down to hell for an aspiring thought, as some think. Uzzah, a good man, was struck dead in a moment for touching the ark; yea, fifty thousand Bethshemites were smitten dead for looking into it. We are apt to entertain slight thoughts of many sins; but God hath set forth some as examples of his hatred and abhorrence of sins seemingly small, for a warning to others, and a testimony and demonstration of his exact holiness.

[5.] In bringing heavy afflictions on his own people for sin. Even the sins of believers in Christ do sometimes cost them very dear. He will not suffer them to pass without correction for their transgressions. Though they are exempted from everlasting torments in hell, yet they are not spared from the furnace of affliction here on earth. We have instances of this in David, Solomon, Jonah, and other saints. Yea, sometimes God in this life, punishes sin more severely in his own people than in other men. Moses was excluded from the land of Canaan but for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, though many greater sinners were suffered to enter in. Such severity towards his own people is a plain demonstration that God hates sin as sin, and not because the worst men commit it.

[6.] In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting torments for sin. That an infinitely good God, who is goodness itself, and delights in mercy, should adjudge so many of his own creatures to the everlasting pains and torments of hell, must proceed from his infinite holiness, on account of something infinitely detested and abhorred by him.

3. The holiness of God appears in our redemption by Jesus Christ. Here his love to holiness and his hatred of sin is most conspicuous. All the demonstrations that ever God gave of his hatred of sin were nothing in comparison of this. Neither all the vials of wrath and judgment which God hath poured out since the world began, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the groans and roarings of the damned in hell, nor that irreversible sentence pronounced against the fallen angels, do afford such a demonstration of the Divine holiness, and hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of the blessed Redeemer. This will appear, if ye consider,

(1.) The great dignity and excellency of his person. He was the eternal and only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Yet he must descend from the throne of his majesty, divest himself of his robes of insupportable light, take upon him the form of a servant, become a curse, and bleed to death for sin. Did ever sin appear so hateful to God as here? To demonstrate God's infinite holiness, and hatred of sin, he would have the most glorious and most excellent person in heaven and earth to suffer for it. He would have his own Son to die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the terrible flames of Divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain for ever disparaged by the violations of his law.

(2.) How dear he was to his Father. He was his only begotten Son, he had not another; the only darling and the chief delight of his soul, who had lain in his bosom from all eternity. Yet as dear as he was to God, he would not and could not spare him, when he stood charged with his people's sins. For saith the apostle, Romans 8:32. 'God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' As he spared him not in a way of free bounty, giving him freely as a ransom for their souls! so he spared him not in a way of vindictive justice, but exacted the utmost mite of satisfaction from him for their sins.

(3.) The greatness of his sufferings. Indeed the extremity of his sufferings cannot be expressed. Insensible nature, as if it had been capable of understanding and affection, was disordered in its whole frame at his death. The sun forsook his shining, and clothed the whole heavens in black; so that the air was dark at noon-day, as if it had been midnight. The earth shook and trembled, the rocks were rent asunder, and universal nature shrank. Christ suffered all that wrath which was due to the elect for their sins. His sufferings were equivalent to those of the damned. He suffered a punishment of loss: for all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended for a time. The

Divine nature kept back all its joys from the human nature of Christ, in the time of his greatest sufferings. We deserved to have been separated from God for ever; and therefore our Redeemer was deserted for a time. There was a suspension of all joy and comfort from his soul, when he needed it most. This was most afflicting and cutting to him, who had never seen a frown in his Father's face before. It made him cry out with a lamentable accent, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Again, he suffered a punishment of sense, and that with respect to both his body and soul. The elect had forfeited both soul and body to Divine vengeance; and therefore Christ suffered in both. The sufferings of his body were indeed terrible. It was filled with exquisite torture and pain. His hands and his feet, the most sensible parts were pierced with nails. His body was distended with such pains and torments as when all the parts are out of joint. Hence it is said of him, Psalms 22:14-15. 'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels, my strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death.' Now, thus did the Son of God suffer. His pure and blessed hands, which were never stretched out but to do good, were pierced and rent asunder; and those feet which bore the Redeemer of the world, and for which the very waters had a reverence, were nailed to a tree. His body, which was the precious workmanship of the Holy Ghost, and the temple of the Deity, was destroyed. But his bodily sufferings were but the body of his sufferings. It was the sufferings of his soul that was the soul of his sufferings. No tongue can tell you what he endured here. When all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended, then an impetuous torrent of unmixed sorrows broke into his soul. O what agonies and conflicts, what sharp encounters, and distresses did he meet with from the wrath of an angry God, pure wrath without any allay or mixture, and all that wrath which was due to the elect through all eternity for their innumerable sins. Sin was so hateful to God, that nothing could expiate it, or satisfy for it, but the death and bitter agonies of his dear Son.

(4.) Consider the cause of his sufferings. It was not for any sin of his own, for he had none, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. They were made his only by a voluntary susception, by taking his people's sins upon him. And though they were only imputed to him, yet God would not spare him. So that there is nothing wherein the Divine holiness and hatred of sin is so manifest as in the sufferings of his own dear Son. This was a greater demonstration thereof than if all men and angels had suffered for it eternally in hell-fire.

05.21. In what God's awful attribute of justice

In What God's Awful

Attribute Of Justice Is Manifested

1. In the temporal judgments which he brings upon sinners even in this life. The saints own this, Nehemiah 9:33. 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.' The end and design of all God's judgments is to witness to the world, that he is a just and righteous God. All the fearful plagues and terrible judgments which God has brought upon the world proclaim and manifest his justice.

2. In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting pains and torments for sin, according to that dreadful sentence which shall be pronounced at the last day, Matthew 25:41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' If you could descend into the bottomless pit, and view the pains and torments of hell, and hear the terrible shrieks and roarings of the damned wallowing in these sulphureous flames, you could not shun to cry out, O the severity of divine justice! Though they are the works of God's own hands, and roar and cry under their torments, yet they cannot obtain any mitigation of their pains, nay, not so much as one drop of water to cool their tongues. That an infinitely good and gracious God, that delights in mercy, should thus torment so many of his own creatures, O how incorruptible must his justice be!

3. In the death and sufferings of Christ. God gave his beloved Son to the death for this end, that it might be known what a just and righteous God he is. God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,' &c. He set him forth in garments rolled in blood, to declare his justice and righteousness to the world. After man turned rebel, and apostatised from God, there was no way to keep up the credit and honour of Divine justice, but either a strict execution of the law's sentence, or a full satisfaction. The execution would have destroyed the whole race of Adam. Therefore Christ stepped in, and made a sufficient satisfaction by his death and sufferings, that so God might exercise his mercy without prejudice to his justice. Thus the blood of the Son of God must be shed for sin, to let the world see that he is a just and righteous God. The justice of God could and would be satisfied with no less. Hence it is said, Romans 8:32. 'God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all.' If forbearance might have been expected from any, surely it might from God, who is full of pity and tender mercy: yet God in this case spared him 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 God spared not his own Son. Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy; yet it was denied to Christ, when he stood in the room of the elect. God abated him not a minute of the wrath which he was to bear. Nay, though in the garden, when Christ fell on the ground, and put up that lamentable and pitiful cry, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' yet no abatement was granted to him. The Father of mercies saw his dear Son humbled in his presence, and yet dealt with him in extreme severity. The sword of justice was in a manner asleep before, in all the terrible judgments which had been executed on the world, but now it must be awakened and roused up to pierce the heart of the blessed Redeemer. Hence it is said, Zechariah 8:7. 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,

and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd.' If divine justice had descended from heaven in a visible form, and hanged up millions of sinners in chains of wrath, it had not been such a demonstration of the wrath of God, and his hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of his own Son. When we hear that God exposed his own Son to the utmost severity of wrath and vengeance, may we not justly cry out, O the infinite evil of sin! O the inflexible severity of Divine justice! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

4. The justice of God will be clearly manifested at the great day. God hath reared up many trophies already to the honour of his power and justice out of the ruins of his most insolent enemies; but then will be the most solemn triumph of Divine justice. The apostle tells us, Acts 17:31. that 'he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. On that awful day the justice and righteousness of God shall be clearly revealed, therefore it is called 'the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' Romans 2:5. The equity of God's dealings and dispensations is not now so fully seen: but all will be open and manifest on that day. Then he will liberally reward the righteous, and severely punish the wicked.

5. God's justice will shine for ever in the torments of the damned in hell. The smoke of their furnace, their yellings and roarings, will proclaim through eternity the inexorable justice and severity of God. It is not enough for the satisfaction of his justice to deprive them of heaven and happiness; but he will inflict the most tormenting punishment upon sense and conscience in hell. For as both soul and body were guilty in this life, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin, so it is but just and equal that they should both feel the penal effects of it hereafter. Sinners shall then be tormented in that wherein they most delighted; they shall then be invested with those objects which will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. The lake to fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness, for ever, are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery. Their punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessary in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and concentered upon damned spirits. The fire without will not be so tormenting as the fire within them. Then all the tormenting passions will be inflamed. What rancour, reluctance, and rage, will there be against the just power that sentenced them to hell! what impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful and inexcusable sins, the just cause of it! How will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction as the final remedy of their misery! But all their ardent wishes will be in vain. For the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell, as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear one hour. The justice of God will blaze forth for ever in the agonies and torments of the damned.

05.22. Plausible objections to the justice of God

Plausible Objections to the Justice of God stated

and answered.

Object. 1. If God be infinitely just and righteous, how stands it with his justice that insolent contemners of his majesty and laws should prosper in the world ? This was observed by the saints long ago; see Psalms 73:5-7, Psalms 73:12. ; and has proved a stumbling-block to some of God's own children, and has been apt to make them question his justice ; see Job 21:7-14. ` Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power ? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not ; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. 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.' Jeremiah 12:1-2. 'Righteous art thou, 0 Lord, when I plead with thee ; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper ? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously ? Thou hast planted them ; yea they have taken root : they grow ; yea, they bring forth fruit thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.' But in answer, consider,

1. That the wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God's work. Though they do not design and intend his glory, yet they may be instrumental in promoting it. Thus Cyrus was instrumental for the building of God's temple at Jerusalem. Now there is some kind of justice in it that such persons should have a temporal reward. God is pleased to suffer those to prosper under whose wings his own people are sheltered. He will not be in any man's debt. Nebuchadnezzar did some service for God, and the Lord rewarded him for it, by granting hint an enlargement of greatness, Ezekiel 29:18-20. ' Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great, service against Tyrus : every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled ; vet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that lie had served against it : Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon ; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey ; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.'

2. God doth not always let the wicked prosper in their sin. There are some whom lie punisheth openly, that his justice may be observed by all. Hence the Psalmist saith, ' The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands,' Psalms 9:16. Sometimes their prosperity is but short-lived, and they are suddenly cast down, as the Psalmist remarks, Psalms 73:18-20. ' Surely thou didst set them in slippery places : thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment ! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh ; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.' His justice is seen striking men dead sometimes in the very act of sin ; as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, &c.

3. God suffers men to go on in sin and prosper, that lie may render them the more inexcusable. This goodness and forbearance should lead them to repentance ; and when it does not, it aggravates their sin, and makes them the more inexcusable, when he comes to reckon with them. Hence it is said of Jezebel, ' I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not,' Revelation 2:21. God spins out his mercies towards sinners ; and if they do not repent and amend, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation.

4. If God let the wicked prosper for a while, the vial of his wrath is all that while filling up, his sword is whetting, and though he forbear them for a time, yet long-suffering is not forgiveness. The longer it be ere lie give the blow, it will be the heavier when it comes. The last scene of justice is coming, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. There is a day of wrath approaching, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then he will glorify his justice in taking vengeance on them for all their sins. God hath an eternity in which he will punish the wicked. Divine justice may be as a lion asleep for a time ; but at last this lion will awake, and roar upon the sinner. Their long continued prosperity will heighten their eternal condemnation. There are many sinners in hell who lived in great pomp and prosperity in the world, and are now roaring under the terrible lashes of inexorable ,justice. Thus ye may see that the prosperity of the wicked is consistent enough with the justice of God.

Object. 2. God's own people oft-times suffer great afflictions in the world ; they are persecuted and oppressed, and meet with a variety of troubles, Psalms 73:14. ' For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' How stands this with the justice of God ?

Ans. 1. The ways of God's judgments, though they are sometimes secret, yet they are never unjust. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. There are culpable causes in them from which their afflictions spring. They have their spots and blemishes as well as others. Though they may be free from gross and atrocious crimes, yet they are guilty of much pride and passion, censoriousness, wordliness, &c. And the sins of God's people are more provoking in his sight than the sins of other men. And God will not suffer them to pass without correction, Amos 3:2. ' You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.' This justifies God in all the evils that befalls them.

2. All the trials and sufferings of the godly are designed to refine and purify them, to promote their spiritual and eternal good, Hebrews 12:10. ' For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Nothing proclaims God's faithfulness more than his taking such a course with them as may make them better. Hence says David, Psalms 119:75. ' I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' Though they are sometimes pinched with wants, and meet with various outward troubles, yet even these are the accomplishments of a gracious promise, and are ordered for their good. It is to chastise them for their sin, and quicken them to repentance and mortification, to try and exercise their faith and patience, their sincerity , and love to God, to wean their hearts from the word, and to promote their growth in grace.

3. It is no injustice in God to inflict a lesser punishment to prevent a greater. The best of God's children have that in them which is meritorious of hell ; and doth God any wrong to them when lie useth only the rod, when they deserved the scorpion ? An earthly parent will not be reckoned cruel

or unust, if he only correct his children who deserved to be disinherited. When God corrects his children, he only puts wormwood into their cup, whereas lie might fill it up with fire and brimstone. Under the greatest pressure, they have just cause rather to admire his mercy, than to complain of his justice. So did the afflicted church, ' It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.'

Object. 3. If God be infinitely just, how could he transfer the punishment from the guilty ? This is the objection of the Socinians against Christ's sufferings for the sins of the elect. It is a violation of justice, say they, to transfer the punishment from one to another. How then could the righteous God punish his innocent Son for our sins ?

I answer to this in general, That in some cases it is not unjust to punish the innocent for the guilty. For though an innocent person cannot suffer as innocent without injustice, yet he may voluntarily contract an obligation which will expose him to deserved sufferings. The innocent may suffer for the guilty, when he has power to dispose of his own life, and puts himself freely and voluntarily under an obligation to suffer, and is admitted to suffer by him who has power to punish, and when no detriment, but rather an advantage, accrues to the public thereby. In these circumstances, justice hath nothing to say against the punishing of an innocent person in the room of the guilty. Now there is a concurrence of all these in the case in hand. For,

1. Christ had absolute power to dispose of himself. One reason why a man is not allowed to lay down his life for another is, because his life is not at his own disposal. But Christ was absolute lord of his own life, and had power to keep it or lay it down as he pleased. So he declares, 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. This commandment have I received of my Father.'

2. He freely consented to suffer for his people, and to undergo the punishment that they deserved. To compel an innocent person to suffer for the offences of another, may be an injury. But in this case there was no constraint : for Christ most willingly offered himself : yea, he was not only willing, but most earnest and desirous to suffer and die in our room, Luke 12:50. ' I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ?'

3. The Father admitted him as our Surety, and was well content that his sufferings should stand for ours, and that we thereupon should be absolved and discharged. It was the Father's will that Christ should undertake this work. Hence it is said, Psalms 40:8. ' I delight to do thy will, O my God.' And the Father loved Christ, because lie so cheerfully consented to it, John 10:17. 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.'

4. There was no detriment to the public by Christ's death ; but, on the contrary, many advantages redounded to it thereby. One reason why an innocent man cannot suffer for a malefactor, is, because the community would lose a good man, and might suffer by the sparing of an ill member, and the innocent sufferer cannot have his life restored again, being once lost. But in this case all things are quite otherwise : for Christ laid down his life, but so as to take it up again. He rose again on the third day, and death was swallowed up of victory. And those for whom he suffered were reclaimed, effectually changed, and made serviceable to God and man. So that here there was no injury done to any party by Christ's sufferings, though an innocent person. Not to them for whom He died ; for they have inexpressible benefit thereby : he is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Not to the person suffering : for He was perfectly willing, and

suffered nothing without his own consent. Not to God : for he himself found out the ransom, and admitted Christ as our Surety. Not to any thing concerned in the government of God : for by the death of Christ all the ends of God's government were secured. His honour was hereby vindicated, the authority of his law preserved, and his subjects, by such an instance of severity on his own Son, were deterred from violating it. So that there is no injustice to any in God's punishing Christ in his people's stead.

Object. 4. How is it consistent with the justice of God to punish temporary sins with eternal torments in hell ? Some think it hard, and scarce consistent with infinite justice, to inflict eternal punishment for sins committed in a little time. But to clear the justice of God in this, consider,

1. That eternal punishment is agreeable to the sanction of the law. The wisdom of God required that the penalty threatened upon the transgressor should be in its own nature so dreadful and terrible, that the fear of it might conquer and over-rule all the allurements and temptations to sin. If it had not been so, it would have reflected upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver, as if he had been defective, in not binding his subjects firmly enough to their duty, and the ends of government would not have been obtained. And therefore the first and second death was threatened to Adam in case of disobedience. And fear, as a watchful sentinel, was placed in his breast, that no guilty thought or irregular desire should enter in, to break the tables of the law deposited there. So that eternal death is due to sinners by the sanction of the law.

2. The righteousness of God in punishing the wicked for ever in hell, will appear, if ye consider that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely serve and obey him shall be rewarded with everlasting happiness. They shall receive a blessedness most worthy of God to bestow, a blessedness that far surmounts our most comprehensive thoughts and imaginations. For eye hath not seen, car hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him. Now, if everlasting felicity be despised and rejected, nothing remains but endless misery to be the sinner's portion. The consequence is infallible : For, if sin, with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, it is most just and equal that the rational creature should inherit the fruit of its own choice. What can be more just and reasonable, than that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here in the world, should have their recompence with him for ever hereafter? Nothing can be more just, than that those who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, should receive that dreadful sentence at last, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire.

3. The punishment of the damned must be eternal, because of the immense guilt and infinite evil of sin. It is owned by common reason, that there ought to be a proportion between the quality of the offence and the degree of the punishment. Justice takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. It is a rule in all sorts of ,judicature, that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity in the person offended. Now, the. majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed ; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. One act of sin is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, the contradiction of his holiness, which is his peculiar glory, the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the heavens, and busied in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not observe what is done here below. And there is in it a defiance of his eternal power, and a provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he. 0 what a dishonour is it to the God of

glory, that proud dust should flee in his face, and control his authority ! What a horrid provocation is it to the Most High, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the Divine law and Lawgiver ! From this it appears that sin is an infinite evil. There is in it a concurrence off impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and whatever may enhance a crime to an excess of wickedness. Now, sin being an infinite evil, the punishment of it must also be infinite ; and because a creature is not able to bear a punishment infinite in degree, by reason of its finite and limited nature, therefore it must be infinite in its duration. And for this cause the punishment of the damned shall never have an end. The almighty power of God will continue them in their being, but they will curse and blaspheme that support, which shall be given them only to perpetuate their torments ; and ten thousand times wish that God would destroy them once for all, and that they might for ever shrink away into nothing. But that will never be granted to them. No ; they shall not have so much as the comfort of dying, nor shall they escape the vengeance of God by annihilation.

4. Their punishment must be eternal : for they will remain for ever unqualified for the least favour. The damned are not changed in hell, but continue their hatred and blasphemies against God. The seeds of this are in obstinate sinners here in the world, who are styled haters of God : but in the damned this hatred is direct and explicit ; the fever is heightened into a phrenzy. The glorious and ever-blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversion. Our Lord tells us, that in hell ` there is weeping and gnashing of teeth,' i. e. extreme sorrow and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and withal are wicked and stubborn, they are enraged and irritated by their misery, and foam out blasphemies against the righteous Judge. We may apply to this purpose what is said of the worshippers of the beast, Revelation 16:10-11. `They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.' The torment and blasphemies of these impenitent idolaters are a true representation of the state of the damned. Now, as they will always sin ; so they must always suffer. On these accounts, then, it is agreeable to the wisdom and justice of God that their pains and torments be eternal.

05.23. Important lessons from the justice of God...

Important Lessons from the Justice of God.

1. Is God infinitely just ? Then there is a judgment to come. The justice of God requires that men should reap according to what they have sown ; that it should be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. But it is not apparently so now in this present world. Here things are out of course; sin is rampant, and runs with a rapid violence. Many times the most guilty sinners are not punished in the present life; they not only escape the justice of men, but are under no conspicuous marks of the justice of God. As sinners prosper and flourish, so saints are wronged and oppressed. They are often cast in a right cause, and can meet with no justice on the earth; yea, the best men are often in the worst condition, and merely upon account of their goodness. They are borne down and oppressed, because they do not make resistance; and are loaded with sufferings many times, because they bear them with patience. And the reason of these dispensations is, because now is the time of God’s patience and of our trial. Therefore there must be a day wherein the justice of God shall be made manifest. Then he will set all things right. He will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked. Then God shall have the glory of his justice, and his righteousness shall be openly vindicated. At the last day God’s sword shall be drawn against offenders, and his justice shall be revealed before all the world. At that day all mouths shall be stopped, and God’s justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamours of unjust men.

2. This lets us see how unlike to God many men are. Some have no justice at all. Though their place and office oblige them to it, they neither fear God nor regard man. Many times they pervert justice, they decree unrighteous decrees, Isaiah 10:1. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed." Many are unjust in their dealings; they trick, cheat, and defraud their neighbours; sometimes in using false weights, the balances of deceit are in their hands, Hosea 12:7. Some hold the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other; they cozen, defraud, and cheat, under a specious profession of religion. Some adulterate their commodities; their wine is mixed with water, Isaiah 1:22; they mix bad grain with good, and yet sell it for pure grain. There are many ways by which men deceive and impose upon their neighbours. All which show what a rare commodity justice is among them. But remember this is very unlike God. For he is the just and right one; he is righteous in all his ways. That man cannot possibly be godly who is not ,just. We are commanded to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. Though he doth not bid you be omnipotent, yet you ought to be just.

3. Is God infinitely just? Then we must not expostulate with or demand a reason of his actions. He hath not only authority on his side, but justice and equity. In all his dispensations towards men, however afflictive they be, he is just and righteous. He layeth judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, Isaiah 28:17. It is below him to give an account to us of any of his proceedings. The plumb-line of our reason is too short to fathom the great depths of God’s justice: for his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out, Romans 11:33. We are to adore his ,justice, where we cannot see the reason of it. God’s justice hath often been wronged,

but never did wrong to any. How unreasonable, then, is it for men to expostulate with and dispute against God ?

4. Is God infinitely just? Then the salvation of sinners who have believed in Christ is most secure, and they need not doubt of pardon and acceptance. God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins,' 1 John 1:9. God hath promised it, and he will not break his word; yea, he stands bound in justice to do it; for Christ hath satisfied his justice for all your sins who are believers, so that it hath nothing to crave of you. It doth not stand with the justice of God to exact the same debt from you. Your Redeemer did not only satisfy justice, but also merited the exercise of it on your behalf. Hence it is that God is bound in justice to justify believers in Jesus; for he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Romans 3:26. So that the thoughts even of Divine justice, which are terrible to others, may be comfortable to believers.

5. Is God infinitely just? Then the destruction of wicked and impenitent sinners is infallibly certain. For the just God will by no means acquit the guilty. His justice, which is essential to him, cannot but take vengeance on you. Lastly, However severely the Lord deals with us, he neither doth nor can do us any wrong; and therefore we should lay our hand on our mouth, Lamentations 3:39. " Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?"

05.24. In what the wondrous goodness of God

In what the wondrous Goodness of God is manifested.

1. In creation. There is no other perfection of the Divine nature so eminently visible in the whole book of the creatures as this is. His goodness was the cause that He made any thing, and his wisdom was the cause that he made every thing in order and harmony. Here the goodness of God shines with a glorious lustre. All the varieties of the creatures which he hath made are so many beams and apparitions of his goodness. It was great goodness to communicate being to some things without himself, and to extract such a multitude of things from the depths of nothing, and to give life and breath to some of these creatures. Divine goodness formed their natures, beautified and adorned them with their several ornaments and perfections, whereby every thing was enabled to act for the good of the common world. Every creature hath a character of Divine goodness upon it. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim, this amiable perfection of God. But the goodness of God is manifested especially in the creation of man. He raised him from the dust by his almighty power, and placed him in a more sublime condition, and endued him with nobler prerogatives, than the rest of the creatures. What is man's soul and body but like a cabinet curiously carved, with a rich and precious gem inclosed in it ! God hath made him an abridgment of the whole creation : the links of the two worlds, heaven and earth, are united in him. He communicates with the earth in the dust of his body, and he participates with the heavens in the crystal of his soul. He has the life of angels in his reason, and that of animals in his sense. Further, the divine goodness is manifested in making man after his image, in furnishing the world with so many creatures for his use, in giving him dominion over the works of his hands, and making him lord of this lower world.

2. In our redemption by Jesus Christ. O what astonishing goodness was it for the great and glorious God to give his only begotten Son to the death for such vile rebels and enemies as we all are by nature ! The goodness of God, under the name of his love, is rendered as the only cause of our redemption by Christ, John 3:16. ' God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' This is an inexpressible so, a so that all the angels of heaven cannot analyse. None can conceive or understand the boundless extent and dimensions of it. God gave Christ for us to commend his love, and set it off with an admirable lustre. God commended his love towards us (saith the apostle), in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.' O what an expensive goodness and love was this ! Our redemption cost God more than what was laid out on the whole creation. ' The redemption of the soul is precious,' says the Psalmist. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.' Here God parted with his richest jewel, and with the eternal delight of his soul. This cost Christ dear. The Sun of righteousness behoved to be eclipsed, and must vail the beams of his Divine glory. He made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of sinful flesh. He did not appear in worldly pomp and magnificence, attended with a splendid retinue, and faring deliciously, but in a mean and low condition, without a settled dwelling-place, and was

exposed to poverty and reproach. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The last scene of his life was most painful. Upon the very apprehension of his last sufferings it is said, ' he began to be sorrowful,' as if he had been a stranger to grief till then. He endured with unparalleled patience all that wrath and misery that his people deserved to have suffered for ever in hell. 0 what a dreadful deluge of wrath and fiery indignation fell from heaven upon our Ark, of which that of Noah was only but a type ! He was bruised and ground to powder as it were in his agony in the garden. O how did his innocent soul boil under the fire of Divine wrath ! His blood brake through every pore of the vessel, by the extremity of that flame. God spared not his own Son, but dealt with him in extreme severity. He paid the utmost mite of satisfaction for his people's sins that justice could demand. 0 what admirable love and goodness is manifested here !

3. In his providential conduct and government. Here we must distinguish a twofold goodness of God, common and special.

(1.) There is God's common goodness, which is common to all the creatures. ' God is good to all,' says the Psalmist. All the creatures taste of his goodness. He preserves them in their beings, continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. ' O Lord, thou preservest man and beast,' says David. He visits us every day, and makes us feel the effects of his goodness, in giving us rain and fruitful seasons,' and filling our hearts with food and gladness. He waters the ground with his showers, and every day shines with new beams of his goodness.

(2.) There is a special goodness of God to his own people, whom he privileges with spiritual and saving blessings. His goodness to them is truly wonderful, in pardoning their iniquities, healing their spiritual diseases, sanctifying their natures, hearing and answering their prayers, bearing with their infirmities, accepting their imperfect services, supporting them under and delivering them from temptations, solving their doubts, directing and guiding them in their difficulties.

4. The goodness of God will be most signally manifested at the last day. It is laid up in heaven, Psalms 31:19. ' Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!' 0 who can tell how great goodness is laid up there ? In heaven they shall have full draughts of his goodness, even as much as they can hold. There, God will be all in all to them, and communicate himself to them immediately, without the intervention of ordinances.

05.25. In what God's glorious attribute of truth

In what God’s glorious Attribute of Truth is

manifested.

1. In his works both of creation and providence; and that both in his common and more ordinary works of providence, in preserving and governing the creatures; and extraordinary ones, such as the glorious work of redemption, his great and miraculous operations, and the wonderful preservations of and deliverances granted to his church and people when exposed to the greatest dangers. God is true in all these; as Psalms 111:7-8. ’The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.’ Psalms 25:10. ’All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.’ It is a part of the church’s song, Revelation 15:3. ’Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Revelation 16:7. ’Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.’ All God’s works are true and real things, not chimeras or appearances. He executes true judgments, grants true deliverances, works true miracles; his mercies are true mercies, and his comforts are true comforts. He does not deceive or delude his people with vain shows and appearances.

4. In his word. His word is most pure truth. ’Thy word is truth,’ says our Saviour, John 17:17. And,

(1.) God is true in all the doctrines which he hath revealed. There is no flaw nor corruption in any of them. They are all the true form of sound words. And especially he is true in the doctrines of the gospel. Hence we read of the ’ truth of the gospel,’ Galatians 2:5.; and the gospel is called ’the word of truth,’ Ephesians 1:13. Some of the doctrines revealed there are above the reach of human reason, as the doctrines of the glorious and adorable Trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, and the mystical union between him and believers. But though they cannot be comprehended by reason, they are not contrary to it.

(2.) In the historical narratives which he hath recorded in his word, as those of the creation, the fall of man, the drowning of the old world with the deluge, the incarnation of Christ, the many miracles which he wrought, his life and bloody death, &c. In these and other historical relations which we have in the word of God, there is no lie nor mistake at all. Hence Luke says, in his preface to his history, Luke 1:3-4. ’It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.’

(3.) In his prophetical predictions. None of them fail or come short of their accomplishment, but they are all fulfilled in their season. A man may foretell such things as depend on natural causes, as rain and snow, heat and cold, the eclipses of the sun and moon, &c. But things are foretold in the scriptures which are merely contingent, depending upon the free grace of God, or the free will of man, as the rejecting of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, &c. None of its predictions have fallen to the ground. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away. The

Lord tells the prophet, The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie,' Habakkuk 2:3. And after divers prophetical predictions, it is said, Revelation 22:6. These sayings are faithful and true.'

(4.) In his commands. All his commands are faithful, and his law is truth. All his precepts which he has given us are counterparts of his own heart, real copies of his approving will. The matter of them is exactly consonant to his holiness, and most acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight. God approves of all that he commands : so that his precepts are a true and perfect rule of holiness, without any flaw or defect.

(5.) In his threatenings. They are always accomplished in their season; not one of them shall fail. Says the Lord to the Jews, by the prophet, Zechariah 1:6. 'Did not my word take hold of your fathers?' And the apostle Paul tells us, Romans 2:2. 'We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.' It is true, indeed, some threatenings are conditional, and to be understood with the exception of repentance; so that unfeigned repentance and reformation prevents the execution of them; as is clear in the case of Nineveh, and from Jeremiah 18:7-8. 'At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it : if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.' But Divine threatenings will surely be executed upon impenitent and incorrigible sinners.

(6.) In his promises. All the promises are yea and amen, i. e. there shall be an infallible accomplishment of them. Therefore promised blessings are called sure mercies, Isaiah 55:3. 'Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' And the gospel, which is the compend of all the promises, is often called the word of truth. God's people have found the truth of the promises many times in their comfortable experience. Says Joshua to the Israelites, Joshua 23:14. ' 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 was now about to die, and therefore could not be supposed to feign and dissemble; and he appeals to their own consciences, 'Ye know,' &c. And Solomon speaks to the same purpose, 1 Kings 8:56. ` Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised : there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. All the promises which he hath made to his people shall have their accomplishment in due time. Now, the truth of God is most frequently taken in this sense in scripture, and in this his faithfulness doth peculiarly consist. And,

(1.) This truth and faithfulness of God shines with peculiar lustre in accomplishing the many promises recorded in the holy scriptures; such as that made to Abraham concerning his seed, that, after their sojourning in a strange land four hundred and thirty years, they should come out again with great substance; which was punctually fulfilled, as Moses tells us, Exodus 12:41. ' 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 from the land of Egypt.' Such also was the accomplishment of the promise relating to the return of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity after seventy years. No length of time nor distance of place can wear the remembrance of his promise from the Divine mind. ' He remembered his holy promise,' says the Psalmist, ' and

Abraham his servant,' Psalms 105:42.

(2.) In accomplishing the promises concerning the Messiah. So it is said, Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; grace in regard of our pardon, and truth in regard of the promise of God, This appears in performing the promise of Christ's incarnation after so many revolutions of time, and many expectations of his coming, and many contrary appearances, and long stay of four thousand years after the first promise. After all this, God made good his word, by sending his Son into the world.---It appears in performing the promise of his death and sufferings. God passed his word to the church, that his Son should suffer death and the wrath of God for elect sinners. And having once passed his word for this, he would not spare him. Rather than God should break his word, his own dear Son must suffer a painful, shameful, and cursed death in his body, and the wrath of God in his innocent soul.---It appears in performing the promise of his resurrection from the dead. God had said, he would not leave his soul in hell, [the state of the dead], nor suffer his holy One to see corruption. This prophecy and promise was accordingly fulfilled : for he was raised from the dead in solemn triumph. Angels attended his resurrection, and the earth trembled and shook, as a sign of triumph and a token of victory; by which Christ intimated to the whole world, that he had overcome death in his own dominions, and lifted up his head as a glorious conqueror over all his enemies. It was promised that he should rise from the dead on the third day : and this was made good to a tittle

(3.) In fulfilling his promises, when great difficulties and seeming improbabilities lay in the way of their accomplishment. Thus God promised to give Abraham a son, and he made it good, though Sarah was barren, and both Abraham and she were past age. Again, he brought back the captives from Babylon, though the thing seemed most improbable, and many great difficulties lay in the way. Difficulties are for men not for God. 'Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?' Genesis 18:14. See Zechariah 8:6. He is not tied to the rod of human probabilities. He will turn nature upside-down, rather than not be as good as his word.

(4.) In fulfilling promises to his people, when their hopes and expectations have been given up. See instances, Ezekiel 37:11. 'Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel : behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost : we are cut off for our parts.' Isaiah 49:14. 'But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,' There may be much unbelief in good men, their faith may be sorely staggered. Yet God is faithful and true. Men may question his promise, but God cannot deny himself,

2 Timothy 2:13. 'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.'

(5.) God's truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is confirmed by testimonies given to it by the saints in all ages. They have all set to their seal that God is true. They have all borne witness for God, and attested his unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come. See instances, Deuteronomy 7:9. Joshua 23:14, 1 Kings 8:56. Psalms 146:6. All learned men are for experiments : now, the saints in all ages have made experiments upon God's word of promise, and have always found him to be true and faithful. 'The word of the Lord is tried,' says the Psalmist. None that relied on his promise were ever disappointed.

We may here also take a short view of the grounds of God's faithfulness. There are divers glorious attributes and perfections of the Divine nature, upon which his truth and faithfulness in keeping

promise is built, as so many strong and unshaken pillars. As,

1. His perfect knowledge of all things past. His knowledge is called ' a book of remembrance,' Malachi 3:16 to signify the continual presence of all things past before him. Men do often break their word, because they forget their promise; but forgetfulness cannot befal a God of infinite knowledge. He will ever be mindful of his covenant, and remember his holy covenant and promises, as the Psalmist speaks.

2. His immutability. Though men in making promises may have a real purpose to perform them, yet they may afterwards change their mind. But God is always firm to his purpose, and cannot change his mind, because of his unchangeable nature. Malachi 3:6. 'For I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed;' James 1:17 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Again, men are often inconsiderate in making promises, and do often meet with what they did not foresee. But all events are eternally foreseen by God. So all his promises are made with infinite wisdom and judgment. To this purpose is that promise, Hosea 2:19. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.

3. His power. Whatsoever he hath promised to his people, he is able to perform it. Sometimes men falsify their promise, and cannot make good their word through a defect of power. But God never out-promised himself. He can do whatsoever he pleased to do. It is said, Psalms 135:6. ' Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth,' &c. Yea, all things are possible with God. This was the foundation of Abraham's faith, which kept it from staggering at the thoughts of the improbabilities which lay in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, Romans 4:21. ' And being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.' In the case of civil debts, many a man cannot keep his promise, because others break to him. But though the whole creation should break, God is as able as ever. Hence the prophet says, Habakkuk 3:17-18, 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 he 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.' Believers in Christ can never be undone, though the whole creation should disband and go into ruin.

4. His holiness. Some men are so wicked and malicious, that though they can, yet they will not keep their word. But it is not so with God. He cannot be charged with any wickedness; for there is no unrighteousness in him, Psalms 92:15 by reason of the perfect holiness of his nature. It is impossible for him to lie. The deceitfulness and treachery that is to be found in men, flows from the corruption that is lodged in their hearts : but the Divine nature is infinitely pure and holy. 'God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Numbers 23:19.

5. His justice and righteousness. A man by virtue of a promise hath a right to the thing promised; so that it is his due; and justice requires to give every one their due. So God by his promise makes himself a debtor, and his justice obliges him to pay. Hence it is said, 1 John 1:9. 'God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' He is faithful to pardon, as he hath promised it; and faithful in keeping promise, because he is just. Though it was his goodness and mercy to make the promise, yet his justice binds him to make it good. It is true, when God makes himself a debtor by his

promise, it is indeed a debt of grace; yet it is a debt which it is just for God to pay. Therefore his word of promise is called the word of. his righteousness,' Psalms 119:123.

6. The glory and honour of his name may give us full assurance of his faithfulness in making good his promises. He doth all things for his own glory; and therefore, wherever you find a promise, the honour of God is given as security for the performance of it. Hence his people plead this as a mighty argument to work for them. So Joshua, Joshua 7:9. 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name? q. d. '0 Lord, thy honour is a thousand times more valuable than our lives. It is not much matter what become of us. But, 0! it is of infinite importance that the glory of thy name be secured, and thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world. We find Moses pleading to the same purpose, Exodus 32:11-12.

Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people;'---q. d. 'It will be sad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon thy people; but infinitely worse for the tongues of the Egyptians to fall upon thy name.' In a word, the glory of all God's attributes is engaged for the performance of his promises, especially his faithfulness and power. Now, these are strong pillars upon which God's truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built. He can as soon cease to be omniscient, unchangeable, omnipotent, infinitely just and holy, as he can cease to be true and faithful. He can as soon divest himself of his glory, and draw an eternal veil over all the shining perfections and excellencies of his nature, as cease to be faithful and true.

05.26. There is, and can be, but one God...

THERE IS, AND CAN BE

BUT ONE GOD

1. The scripture is very express and pointed on this head: Deuteronomy 6:4 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.' Isaiah 44:6 ' I am the first, and the last, and besides me there is no God. Mark 12:32 'There is one God, and there is none other but he.' Consult also the following passages, which clearly establish this article, viz. 1 Samuel 2:2 'There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides thee; neither is there any rock like our God.' Psalms 18:31. 'For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God?' Isaiah 46:9 'Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; 1 Corinthians 8:4. 1 Corinthians 8:6. 'As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.'

2. This truth is clear from reason.

(1.) There can be but one First Cause, which hath its being of itself, and gave being to all other things, and on which all other things depend, and that is God: for one such is sufficient for the production, preservation, and government of all things : and therefore more are superfluous, for there is no need of them at all. Certainly he that made the world can preserve, govern, and guide it, without the assistance of any other God. For if he needed any assistance, he were not God himself, an infinitely perfect and all-sufficient Being. And whatever power, wisdom, or other requisite perfections can he imagined to be in many gods, for making, preserving, and governing the world, all these are in one infinitely-perfect Being. Therefore it is useless to feign many, seeing one is sufficient.

(2.) There can be but one Infinite Being, and therefore there is but one God. Two infinites imply a contradiction. Seeing God fills heaven and earth with his presence, and is infinite in all the perfections and excellencies of his nature; there can be no place for another infinite to subsist.

(3.) There can be but one Independent Being, and therefore but one God. Ist, There can be but one independent in being: for if there were more gods, either one of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and then that one would be the only God : or none of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and so none of them would be God; because none of them would be independent, or the fountain of being to all. 2d, There can be but one independent in working. For if there were more independent beings, then in those things wherein they will and act freely, they might will and act contrary things, and so oppose and hinder one another: so that being equal in power, nothing would be done by either of them. Yea, though we should suppose a plurality of gods agreeing in all things, yet seeing their mutual consent and agreement would be necessary to every action, it plainly appears, that each of them would necessarily depend on the

rest in his operations ; and so none of them would be God, because not absolutely independent.

(4.) There can be but one Omnipotent. For if there were two omnipotent beings, then the one is able to do whatsoever he will, and yet the other is able to resist and hinder him. And if the one cannot hinder the other, then that other is not omnipotent. Again, we must conceive two such beings, either as agreeing, and so the one would be superfluous; or as disagreeing, and so all would be brought to confusion, or nothing would be done at all; for that which the one would do, the other would oppose and hinder; just like a ship with two pilots of equal power, where the one would be ever cross to the other? when the one would sail, the other would cast anchor. Here would be a continual confusion, and the ship must needs perish. The order and harmony of the world, the constant and uniform government of all things, is a plain argument, that there is but one only Omnipotent Being that rules all.

(5.) The supposition of a plurality of gods is destructive to all true religion. For if there were more than one God, we would be obliged to worship and serve more than one. But this it is impossible for us to do ; as will plainly appear, if ye consider what divine worship and service is. Religious worship and adoration must be performed with the whole man. This is what the divine eminence and excellency requires, that we love him with all our heart, soul, and strength, and serve him with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies ; and that our whole man, time, strength, and all we have, be entirely devoted to him alone. But this cannot be done to a plurality of gods. For in serving and worshipping a plurality, our hearts and strength, our time and talents, would be divided among them. To this purpose our Lord argues, Matthew 6:24. 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Mammon is thought to be an idol, which the heathens reckoned to be the god of money and riches. Now, says Christ you cannot serve them both; if you would have the Lord for your God, and serve him, you must renounce mammon. We cannot serve two gods or masters: if but one require our whole time and strength, we cannot serve the other.

6. If there might be more gods than one, nothing would hinder why there might not be one, or two, or three millions of them. No argument can be brought for a plurality of gods, suppose two or three, but what a man might, by parity of reason, make use of for ever so many. Hence it is, that when men have once begun to fancy a plurality of gods, they have been endless in such fancies and imaginations. To this purpose is that charge against the Jews, who in this conformed themselves very much to the nations round about them,' According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah,' Jeremiah 2:28. Varro reckons up three hundred gods whom the heathens worshipped, and Hesiod reckons about three thousand of them. Indeed, if we once begin to fancy more gods than one, where shall we make an end? So that the opinion or conception of a plurality of gods is most ridiculous and irrational. And this should be observed against those who pretend, that the Father is the Most High God, and that there is no Most High God but one, yet that there is another true God, viz. Christ, who in very deed, as to them, is but a mere man; yet they pretend he is the true God. Christ is God, and the True and Most High God. But, in opposition to them, consider that to be a man, and to be a God are opposite, and cannot be said of one in respect of one nature, Jeremiah 31:3; Acts 14:15; Jeremiah 10:11.

05.27. The awful and destructive nature of atheism...

The awful and destructive

nature of Atheism.

1. Wo to atheists, then, whether they be such in heart or life ; for their case is dreadful and desperate : and they shall sooner or later feel the heaviest strokes of the vengeance of that God whom they impiously deny, whether in opinion or by works. To dissuade from this fearful wickedness, consider,

(I.) That atheism is most irrational. It is great folly ; and therefore the Psalmist saith, Psalms 14:1. ' The foot hath said in his heart, There is no God.' It is contrary to the stream of universal reason ; contrary to the natural dictates of the atheist's own soul; and contrary to the testimony of every creature. The atheist hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in heaven and earth. Besides, it is most unreasonable for any man to hazard himself on this bottom in the denial of a God. May he not reason thus with himself, what if there be a God, for any thing that I know ? then what a dreadful case will I be in when I find it so? If there be a God, and I fear and serve him, I gain a blessed and glorious eternity ; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by believing that there is one. Now, ought not reasonable creatures to argue thus with themselves ? What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him ! He will meet with fearful reproaches on God's part, and with dreadful terrors on his own : all that he gains is but a liberty to sin here, and a certainty to suffer for it hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

(2.) Atheism is most impious. What horrid impiety is it for men to deny their Creator a being, without whose goodness they could have had none themselves ? Nay, every atheist is a Deicide, a killer of God as much as in him lies. He aims at the destruction of his very being. The atheist says upon the matter, that God is unworthy of a being, and that it were well if the world were rid of him.

(3.) Atheism is of pernicious consequence both to others and to the atheist himself. To others : for

1st, It would root out the foundation of government, and demolish all order among men. The being of God is the great guard of the world : for it is the sense of a Deity, upon which all civil order in cities and kingdoms is founded. Without this,, there is no tie upon the consciences of men to restrain them from the most atrocious impieties and villanies. A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion. There could be no traffic nor commerce, if all the sacred bonds of it in the consciences of men were thus snapt asunder by denying the existence of God.

2d, It is introductive of all evil into the world. If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made, when the measure and standard of them is removed ? for all good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, and upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God. So

that if the foundation be destroyed, the whole superstructure must needs tumble down. A man might be a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, and yet in a strict sense not be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a god to himself. Where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, and the flood-gates of all impiety rush in upon mankind. The whole earth would be filled with violence, and all flesh would corrupt their way.

Again, atheism is pernicious to the atheist himself, who denies the being of God, or endeavours to erase all notions of the Deity out of his mind. What can he gain by this but a sordid pleasure, unworthy of a reasonable nature ? And suppose there were no God, what can he lose but his fleshly lusts, by believing there is one? By believing and confessing a God, a man ventures no loss; but by denying him, he runs the most desperate hazard if there be one. For this exposes him to the most dreadful wrath and vengeance of God. If there be a hotter receptacle in hell than another, it will be reserved for the atheist, who strikes and fights against God's very being.

(4.) Atheists are worse than heathens: for they worshipped many gods, but these worship none at all. They preserved some notion of God in the world, but these would banish him from heaven and earth. They degraded him, but these would destroy him. Yea, they are worse than the very devils: for the devils are under the dread of this truth, That God is. It is said they I believe and tremble,' James 2:19. It is impossible for them to be atheists in opinion ; for they feel there is a God by that sense of his wrath that torments them. There may be atheists in the church, but there are none in hell. Thus atheism is a most dreadful evil, most carefully to be guarded against.

05.28. Directions how to guard against atheism...

Directions how to guard

against Atheism?

1. Beware of such opinions as tend to atheism, and aim at the undermining of this supreme truth, that God is. There are many opinions which have a woeful tendency this way. Such is that of denying the immortality of the soul. This is a stroke at a distance at the very being of God, who is the Supreme Spirit. There is an order among spirits ; first the souls of men, then angels, and then God. Now, these degrees of spirits are, as it were, a rail and fence about the sense we have of the being and majesty of God. And such as deny the immortality of the soul, strike at a distance at the eternity and existence of the Deity.

Another opinion is, that men of all religions shall be saved; so that it is no matter what religion a man be of, if he walk according to the principles of it, and be of a sober moral life. In these latter times some are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity betray their faith, and plead for the salvation of heathens, Turks, and infidels. But ye should remember, that, as there is but one God, and one heavenly Jerusalem, so there is but one faith, and one way by which men can come to the enjoyment of God there. Such libertine principles have a manifest tendency to shake people loose of all religion. To make many doors to heaven, as one says, is to widen the gates of hell.

Another opinion tending to atheism is, the denying of God’s providence in the government of the world. Some make him an idle spectator of what is done here below, asserting that he is contented with his own blessedness and glory, and that whatever is without him is neither in his thoughts nor care. Many think that this world is but as a great clock or machine, which was set agoing at first by God, and afterwards left to its own motion. But if ye exempt any thing from the dominion of providence, then you will soon run into all manner of libertinism. If Satan and wicked men may do what they will, and God be only a looker-on, and not concerned with human affairs, then ye may worship the devil, lest he hurt you, and fear men, though God be propitious to you.

2. Beware of indulging sin. When ye take a liberty to sin, and gratify your vile and sordid lusts, you will hate the law that forbids it; and this will lead you to a hatred of the Lawgiver; and hatred of God strikes against his very being. When once you allow yourselves an indulgence to sin, you will be apt to think, 0 that there were no God to punish me for my crimes! and would gladly persuade yourselves that there is none ; and will think it your only game to do what he can to root out the notions of God in your own minds, for your own quiet, that so ye may wallow in sin without remorse.

3. Prize and study the holy scriptures, for they show clearly that there is a God. There are more clear marks and characters of a Deity stamped upon the holy scriptures than upon all the works of nature. Therefore converse much with them. By this means was Junius converted from atheism. His father perceiving him to be so atheistical, caused lay a Bible in every room, so that into

whatsoever room he entered, a Bible haunted him; and he fancied it upbraided him thus: I Wilt thou not read me, atheist? wilt thou not read me?' Whereupon he read it, and was thereby converted. I say then, study the holy scriptures, and in doing so, learn to submit your reason to divine revelation. For some men, neglecting the scriptures, and going forth in the pride of their own understandings, have at last disputed themselves into flat atheism.

4. Study God in the creatures as well as in the scriptures. The creatures were all made to be heralds of the divine glory, and his glorious being and perfections appear evidently in them. Hence saith the Psalmist, Psalms 19:1-4. 'The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth his handy-work, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world: in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.' The world is sometimes compared to a book, and sometimes to a preacher. The universe is like a great printed book, wherein God sets forth himself to our view; and the great diversity of creatures which are in it, are as so many letters, out of which we may spell his name. And they all preach loudly unto us the glorious being and excellencies of God. And therefore the apostle tells us, Romans 1:20. 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.' In the book of the creatures God hath written a part of the excellency of his name ; and you should learn to read God wherever he hath made himself legible to you.

5. Ye who are yet sinners, lying in your natural state of sin and misery, come unto God in Christ, and receive him as your God by faith, and so ye will be preserved from atheism. And ye who are believers in Christ, be often viewing God in your own experiences of him. Have you not often found God in the strengthening, reviving, and refreshing influences of his grace upon your souls ? Have ye not had sweet manifestations of his love ? Have you not had frequent refreshing tastes of his goodness, in pardoning your iniquities, hearing and answering your prayers, supplying your wants, and feasting your souls? The reviewing of such experiences will be a mighty preservative against atheism. Can you doubt of his being, when you have been so often revived, refreshed, and supported by him? The secret touches of God upon your hearts, and your inward converses with him, are to you a clearer evidence of the being of God, than all the works of nature.

05.29. Clear evidence of the Godhead subsisting

Clear evidence of the Godhead subsisting in

three persons.

1. The Old Testament plainly holds forth a plurality of persons in the Godhead, Genesis 1:26. ’ God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness ;’ Genesis 3:12. ’ And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.’ This cannot be understood of angels : for man is said to be created after the image of God, but never after the image of angels ; and the temptation was, ’ Ye shall be as gods,’ not as angels. Nor must it be conceived, that God speaks so after the manner of kings ; for that way of speaking is used rather to note modesty than royalty. But when God speaks so as to discover most of his royalty, He speaks in the singular number, as in the giving of the law, ’ I am the Lord thy God.’ This trinity of persons is also not obscurely mentioned in Psalms 33:6. ’ By the word of’ the Lord, or JEHOVAH, were the heavens made ; and all the host of them, by the breath, or spirit, of his mouth.’ Here is mention made of Jehovah the Word and the Spirit, as jointly acting in the work of creation. Accordingly we find, that ’ all things were made by the Word,’ John 1:3. and that ’ the Spirit garnished the heavens,’ Job 26:13. Nay, a Trinity of persons is mentioned, Isa. lxiii. where, besides that the Lord, or Jehovah, is three times spoken of, Isaiah 43:7. we read of ` the angel of his presence,’ which denotes two persons and ` his Spirit,’ ver. 9, 10. So that it evidently appears, that the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament most plainly teaches this doctrine.

(1) I begin with the text, where it is expressly asserted, There are three that bear record, &c. Here arc three witnesses, and therefore three persons. Not three names of one person : for if a person have ever so many names, he is still but one witness. Not three Gods, but one.

(2.) In the baptism of Christ, Matthew 3:16-17. mention is made of the Father speaking with an audible voice, the Son in the human nature baptized by John, and the Holy Ghost appearing in the shape of a dove ; plainly importing three Divine persons.

(3.) This appears from our baptism, Matthew 28:19. ’ Go ye and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.’ Observe the words, in the name, not names ; which denotes, that these three are one God : and yet they are distinctly reckoned three in number, and so are three distinct persons.

(4.) It appears from the apostolical benediction, where all blessings are sought from the three persons distinctly mentioned, 2 Corinthians 13:14. ’ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.’

05.30. How the three persons of the Godhead are

How the three persons of the Godhead are distinguished. The Son is distinct from the Father ' being the express image of his person,' Hebrews 1:2. ; and in John 8:17-18. he reckons his Father one witness and himself another. And that the Holy Ghost is distinct from both, appears from John 14:16-17. ' I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever : even the Spirit of truth.' And the text is plain for the distinction of all the three. Now, they are distinguished by their order of subsisting, and their incommunicable personal properties. In respect of the order of subsistence, the Father is the first person, as the fountain of the Deity, having the foundation of personal subsistence in himself ; the Son is the second person, and hath the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father ; and the Holy Ghost is the third person, as having the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son. And so for their personal properties,

1. It is the personal property of the Father to beget the Son, Hebrews 1:5-6. Hebrews 1:8. ' Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. --But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, 0 God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' This cannot be ascribed either to the Son or Holy Ghost.

2. It is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father, John 1:14. John 1:18. ' We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father. No man hath seen God at any time : the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'

3. The property of the Holy Ghost is to proceed from the Father and the Son, John 15:26. ' When the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,' in Galatians 4:6. he is called ' the Spirit of the Son ;' and in Romans 7:9. ' the Spirit of Christ,' He is said to receive all things from Christ,' John 14:14-15; to be ' sent by him,' John 15:26. ; and to be ' sent by the Father in Christ's name,' John 14:26. All this plainly implies, that the Holy Spirit proceedeth both from the Father and the Son. This generation of the Son and Holy Ghost was from all eternity. For as God is from everlasting to everlasting, so must this generation and procession be and to deny it, would be to deny the supreme and eternal Godhead of all the three glorious persons.

05.31. Clear evidence of the three persons

Clear evidence of the three persons of the Godhead

being one God.

1. How express is that text, These three are one. When the apostle speaks of the unity of the earthly witnesses, ver. 8. He says, they ` agree in one,' acting in unity of consent or agreement only. But the heavenly witnesses are one, viz. in nature or essence. They are not only of a like nature or substance, but one and the same substance ; and if so, they are and must be equal in all essential perfections, as power and glory.

2. There is but one true God, as was before proved, and there can be but one true God. Now, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them the true God ; and therefore they are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And this I shall prove by scripture testimony.

First, That the Father is true God, none that acknowledge a God do deny. Divine worship and attributes are ascribed

to him. But, Secondly, That the Son is true God, appears if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him God, Romans 4:5; John 1:1; Acts 20:28 ; ` the true God,' 1 John 5:20 ; ` the great God,' Titus 2:13 ; the ' mighty God,' Isaiah 9:6 ' Jehovah or Lord,' Malachi 3:1. which is a name proper to the true God only, Psalms 83:1-18 ult.

2. The attributes of God, which are one and the same with God himself, are ascribed to him ; as eternity, Micah 5:2 "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" ; independency and omnipotence, Revelation 1:8 ' The almighty; ' omnipresence, John 3:13 where he is said to be ' in heaven,' when bodily on earth ; and Matthew 28:20 ' Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world:' omniscience, John 21:17. " Lord thou knowest all things," says Peter to him ; and unchangeableness, Hebrews 1:11-12. ' They shall perish, but thou remainest : and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

3. The works proper and peculiar to God are ascribed to him ; as creation, John 1:3. ' All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Conservation of all things, Hebrews 1:3.-` upholding all things by the word of his power.' Raising the dead by his own power, and at his own pleasure, John 5:21. John 5:26. The Son quickeneth whom he will.' The Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself.' The saving of sinners, Hosea 1:7 -I will save them by the Lord their God.' Compare Hosea 13:4 ' in me is thine help.' Yea, whatsoever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise.

4. Divine worship is due to him, and therefore he is true God, Matthew 4:10. The angels are commanded to ' worship him,' Hebrews 1:8. All must give the same honour to him as to the Father, John 5:23. We must have faith in him, and they are blessed that believe in him, Psalms

2:12. compare Jeremiah 17:5 We are to pray to him, Acts 7:58. ; and we are baptized in his name, Matthew 28:19. Nay, he is expressly said to be ’ equal with the Father,’ Php 2:6. and ’ one with him.’ John 10:30. Now, seeing God ’ will not give his glory to another,’ Isaiah 48:11 because he is true and cannot lie, and he is just, it follows, that though Christ be a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from his Father, but one God with him, the same in substance equal in power and glory. And it is no contradiction to this doctrine, when Christ says, ’ My Father is greater than I,’ John 14:28. ; for He is not speaking there of his nature as God, but of his mediatory office ; and hence he is called the Father’s ’ servant,’ Isaiah 13:1.

Thirdly, That the Holy Ghost is true God, or a Divine person, appears, if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him God, Acts 5:3-4.; 1 Corinthians 3:16. ; Isaiah 6:9. compared with Acts 28:25-26; 2 Samuel 22:2-3. He is called ’ Jehovah, or the Lord,’ Numbers 12:6. compare 2 Peter 1:21.

2. Divine attributes are ascribed to him ; as omnipotence, he ’ worketh all in all,’ 1 Corinthians 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:9-11. ; omnipresence, Psalms 139:7. ; and omniscience, 1 Corinthians 2:10.

3. Works peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, Psalms 33:6 ; conservation, Psalms 104:30; working miracles, Matthew 12:28. ; raising the dead, Romans 8:11. ; inspiring the prophets, 2 Timothy 3:16. compare 2 Peter 1:21.

4. Divine worship is due to him. We are baptized in his name, Matthew 28:19; we are to pray to him, 2 Corinthians 13:14; Acts 4:23, Acts 4:25 compare 2 Samuel 23:2-3.

Hence it appears,

1. That the Godhead is not divided, but that each of the three persons hath the one whole Godhead, or divine nature.

2. That it is sinful to imagine any inequality amongst the three Divine persons, or to think one of them more honourable than another, seeing they are all one God.

05.32. The great importance of the doctrine of the

The great importance of the doctrine of the

Holy Trinity.

It is a fundamental article, the belief whereof is necessary to salvation. For those that are ’ without God,’ Ephesians 2:12. and ’ have not the Father,’ cannot be saved ; but ’ whoso denieth the son, the same hath not the Father,’ 1 John 2:23. Those that are none of Christ’s cannot be saved : but ’ he that hath not the Spirit, is none of his,’ Romans 8:9. None receive the Spirit but those that know him. John 14:17. This mystery of the Trinity is so interwoven with the whole of religion, that there can neither be any true faith, right worship, or obedience without it. For take away this doctrine, and the object of faith, worship, and obedience is changed ; seeing the object of these declared in the scripture, is the three persons in the Godhead; and the scriptures know no other God. Where is faith, if this be taken away? John 17:3. ’ This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ Here it is to be observed, that our Lord does not call the Father only the true God, exclusive of the other persons of the Trinity ; but that he (including the other persons who all subsist in the same one undivided essence) is the only true God, in opposition to idols, falsely called gods. 1 John 2:23. ’ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.’ There is no more true worship or fellowship with God in it: ’ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,’ Ephesians 2:18. And there is no more obedience without it, John 15:23. ’ He that hateth me,’ says Christ, ’ hateth my Father also,’ John 5:23. ’ He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.’ We are debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit, and are bound by baptism to the obedience of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

05.33. Interesting explanation of Acts 10:33

INTERESTING EXPLANATION OF

Acts 10:33

"Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Here we have,

1. A call to Peter related. The person calling is Cornelius, a soldier. A Gentile he was, yet a proselyte; a good man, but one who as yet knew not the doctrine of Christ crucified. The person called was Peter; him God honoured to break the ice for the calling of the Gentiles, and to take down the first stone in the partition-wall betwixt Jews and Gentiles. The call itself is in these words, I sent. He had sent three men to invite Peter to his house, Acts 10:7. The reason of the call is thus expressed, Therefore, because he had the command of God for that effect. He made quick dispatch in the call; it was done immediately after the mind of God was discovered to him.

2. Peter’s compliance with the call commended, Thou hast well done that thou art come. It is acceptable to God and to us. Peter had no great inclination to this work; he had his scruples about the lawfulness of it: but God condescends to solve his doubts, and clear his way. It was very offensive to the Christian Jews, which necessitated him to make an apology for his practice, Acts 11:1-30 yet after all it was well done to come, because he came in obedience to the call of God.

3. An address made to Peter when he was come, by Cornelius the caller, in name of himself and those who were with him. In which take notice, First, Of a congregation, though small, yet well convened. What the congregation was, see Acts 10:24. "his kinsmen and near friends." These, with his family, and those that came with Peter, made up the assembly. The good man made it his business to get not only his own family, but his friends, to wait on the ordinances. Second, An acknowledgment of God’s presence in a special manner in religious assemblies, We are all here present before God. Third, The great end of their meeting was their souls’ edification, to hear, that is, to hear and obey. And here is what the minister is to preach and the people to receive; it is what is commanded of God. The minister has a commission from God, and he must preach, not what men would have him to preach, but what God commands; and the people are to receive nothing that is beyond his commission. The extent of both is all things; the minister is to preach, and the people to receive, all things commanded of God.

Obs.1. When God discovers his mind in any particular to a person or people, it is their duty presently to comply with it without delay. There should be no disputing after the discovery of the Lord’s mind, Galatians 1:15-17. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." The

contrary was the fault of Balaam, and of the Jews in Egypt, Jeremiah 44:1-30.

2. It is a blessed thing for a people to call that minister to whom God himself directs and inclines them. It is like Cornelius, who did not so much as know Peter by name, Acts 10:5; but he goes to God, and God directs him.

3. It is a commendable thing in a minister of Christ to comply with the call of God and his people, though it should be offensive to some, and not very agreeable to his own inclinations. Ministers are to go, not where they will and others would wish them, but where God wills. It was Levi's commendation, "who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed they word, and kept thy covenant." Deuteronomy 33:9.

05.34. Reasons why we should be careful to attend

Reasons why we should be careful to attend the Public Ordinances of God.

1. Because God has commanded it, Hebrews 10:25.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." The Lord calls his people to be present there, where- ever it is. Thus there was the tabernacle of the congregation in the wilderness, thither the people resorted to the public worship ; and afterwards the temple. And for ordinary the synagogues under the Old Testament were the places of public worship, the ruins of which the church complains of, Psalms 74:8. It was the practice of Christ himself to attend these places, as we find, Luke 4:16. He sends ministers to preach, and therefore commands people to hear.

2. Because the public assemblies are for the honour of Christ in the world. They are that place where his honour dwells, where his people meet together to profess their subjection to his laws, to receive his orders, to seek his help, to pay him the tribute of praise, the calves of their lips. And forasmuch as all are obliged to these things, all are obliged to be present and attend, and to cast in their mite into this treasury. And therefore the people of God look on Christ's standard in the world as fallen, when these assemblies are gone, as Elijah did, 1 Kings 19:10.

3. Because these assemblies are the ordinary place where Christ makes his conquest of souls, 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?' The gospel is Christ's net wherein souls are catched. And it is always good to be in Christ's way. Who knows when that good word may come that may take hold of the man's heart, and make him Christ's prisoner, bound with the cords of love? A great number were catched at the first sermon preached after Christ's ascension, and cried out ' What shall we do?' Acts 2:37. So Lydia hearing the apostle Paul, her heart was opened, Acts 16:14. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Happy are they that get the deepest wounds in this field, ' For the weapons of this warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

4. They are Christ's trysting-place with his people, the galleries wherein our Lord walks, Exodus 20:24. the mountains of myrrh, where he will be till the day break. Those that mind for communion with God, should seek him there, and wait on him where he has promised to be found. What a disadvantage had Thomas by his absence from one meeting where Christ met with the rest of the disciples

5. The delights of Christ and his people meet there ; for ordinances are the heaven on earth. Christ delights to be there with his people, Psalms 87:2 ' The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' Luke 22:15. ' With desire,' said our Lord, I have desired to eat this

passover with you before I suffer.' And they delight to be there with him, and for him. how passionately does David desire the ordinances ! Psalms 84:1-2.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, 0 Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' He prefers a day in God's courts to a thousand ' I had rather,' says he, ' be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' And again, ' One thing,' says he, have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple,' Psalms 27:4. What good news was it to him to hear of an opportunity of waiting on God there! Psalms 122:1 ' I was glad,' says he, ' when they said unto me, Let us go up into the house of the Lord.'

Lastly, The necessities of all that mind for heaven require it. Had the ordinances not been necessary. God would never have appointed them. And sure they are not more necessary for any than those that least see their need of them. these are the blind souls that have need to conic to the market of free grace, for that eye-salve that open the eyes of those that see not. Have not Christ's soldiers need of them to clear their rusty armour? Do not dead souls need them to quicken them ? Sleepy souls, to awaken them ? They are the pools in the way to Zion, which the travellers to Zion have much need of to quench their thirst in their weary journey.

Surely the due consideration of these things may engage us all to make conscience of being all there present, as God gives opportunity.

05.35. The chief end of God's decrees explained

THE CHIEF END OF

GOD’S DECREES EXPLAINED And this is no other than his own glory. Every rational agent acts for an end; and God being the most perfect agent, and his glory the highest end, there can be no doubt but all his decrees are directed to that end. "For --- to him are all things," Romans 11:36. "That we should be to the praise of his glory," Ephesians 1:12. In all, he aims at his glory; and seeing he aims at it, he gets it even from the most sinful actions he has decreed to permit. Either the glory of his mercy or of his justice he draws therefrom. Infinite wisdom directs all to the end intended. More particularly:

1. This was God’s end in the creation of the world. The divine perfections are admirably glorified here, not only in regard of the greatness of the effect, which comprehends the heavens and the earth, and all things therein; but in regard of the marvelous way of its production. For he made the vast universe without the concurrence of any material cause; he brought it forth from the womb of nothing by an act of his efficacious will. And as he began the creation by proceeding from nothing to real existence, so in forming the other parts he drew them from infirm and indisposed matter, as from a second nothing, that all his creatures might bear the signatures of infinite power. Thus he commanded light to arise out of darkness, and sensible creatures from an insensible element. The lustre of the divine glory appears eminently here. Hence says David, Psalms 19:1. "The heavens declare the glory of God." They declare and manifest to the world the attributes and perfections of their great Creator, even in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. All the creatures have some prints of God stamped upon them, whereby they loudly proclaim and show to the world his wisdom and goodness in framing them. Hence says Paul, Romans 1:20. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

2. The glory of God was his chief end and design in making men and angels. The rest of the creatures glorified God in an objective way, as they are evidences and manifestations of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But this higher rank of beings are endued with rational faculties, and so are capable to glorify God actively. Hence it is said, Proverbs 16:4. "The Lord hath made all things for himself." If all things were made for him, then man and angels especially, who are the master-pieces of the whole creation. We have our rise and being from the pure fountain of God’s infinite power and goodness; and therefore we ought to run towards that again, till we empty all our faculties and excellencies into that same ocean of divine goodness.

3. This is likewise the end of election and predestination. For "he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, to the praise of the glory of his grace." That some are ordained to eternal life, and others passed by, and suffered to perish eternally in their sin, is for the manifestation of the infinite perfections and excellencies of God. The glory and beauty of the divine attributes is displayed here with a shining lustre; as his sovereign authority and dominion over all his creatures to dispose of them to what ends and purposes he pleaseth; his knowledge and omniscience, in

beholding all things past, present, and to come; his vindictive justice, in ordaining punishments to men, as a just retribution for sin; and his omnipotence, in making good his word, and putting all his threatenings in execution. The glory of his goodness shines likewise here, in making choice of any, when all most justly deserved to be rejected. And his mercy shines here with an amiable lustre, in receiving and admitting all who believe in Jesus into his favour.

4. This was the end that God proposed in that great and astonsihing work of redemption. In our redemption by Christ, we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of his glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here. Indeed the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and discover one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. his truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory. And this is the end that God proposed in their conversion and regeneration. Hence it is said, Isaiah 43:21. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." Sinners are adopted into God’s family and made a royal priesthood on this very design," 1 Peter 2:9. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

05.36. The properties of God's decrees explained

The properties of God’s decrees explained.

1. They are eternal. God makes no decrees in time, but they were all from eternity. So the decree of election is said to have been ’ before the foundation of the world,’ Ephesians 1:4. ’ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.’ Yea, whatever he doth in time, was decreed by him, seeing it was known to him before time, Acts 15:18. ’ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.’ And this foreknowledge is founded on the decree. If the divine decrees were not eternal, God would not be most perfect and un-changeable, but, like weak man, should take new counsels, and would be unable to tell every thing that were to come to pass.

2. They are most wise, ’ according to the counsel of his will.’ God cannot properly deliberate or take counsel, as men do ; for he sees all things together and at once. And thus his decrees are made with perfect judgment, and laid in the depth of wisdom, Romans 11:33. ’ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!’ So that nothing is determined that could have been better determined.

3. They are most free, according to the counsel of his own will ; depending on no other, but all flowing from the mere pleasure of his own will, Romans 11:34. ’ For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?’ Whatsoever he decreeth to work without himself, is from his free choice. So his decrees are all absolute, and there are none of them conditional. He has made no decrees suspended on any condition without himself. Neither has he decreed any thing because he saw it would come to pass, or as that which would come to pass on such or such conditions ; for then they should be no more according to the counsel of his will, but the creature’s will. For God’s decrees being eternal, cannot depend upon a condition which is temporal. They are the determinate counsels of God, but a conditional decree determines nothing. Such conditional decrees are inconsistent with the infinite wisdom of God, and are in men only the effects of weakness ; and they are inconsistent with the independency of God, making them depend on the creature.

4. They are unchangeable. They are the unalterable laws of heaven. God’s decrees are constant ; and he by no means alters his purpose, as men do, Psalms 33:11. ’ The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.’ Hence they are compared to mountains of brass, Zechariah 6:1. As nothing can escape his first view, so nothing can be added to his knowledge. Hence Balaam said, ’ God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent : hath he said, and shall He not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ?’ Numbers 23:19. The decree of election is irreversible : ` The foundation of God, (says the apostle), standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,’ 2 Timothy 2:19.

5. They are most holy and pure. For as the sun darts its beams upon a dunghill, and yet is no way defiled by it; so God decrees the permission of sin, yet is not the author of sin : 1 John 1:5. ’ God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,’ James 1:13, James 1:17. ’ God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’

6. They are effectual : that is, whatsoever God decrees, comes to pass infallibly, Isaiah 46:10. ’ My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’ He cannot fall short of what he has determined. Yet the liberty of second causes is not hereby taken away ; for the decree of God offers no violence to the creature’s will ; as appears from the free and unforced acting’s of Joseph’s brethren, Pharaoh, the Jews that crucified Christ, &c. Nor does it take away the contingency of second causes, either in themselves or as to us, as appears by the lot cast into the lap. Nay, they are thereby established, because he hath efficaciously foreordained that such effects shall follow on such causes.

05.37. Important lessons drawn from the decrees

Important lessons drawn from the decrees of God

1. Has God decreed all things that come to pass ? Then there is nothing that falls out by chance, nor are we to ascribe what we meet with either to good or ill luck and fortune. There are many events in the world which men look upon as mere accidents, yet all these come by the counsel and appointment of Heaven. Solomon tells us, Proverbs 16:33. that "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord." However casual and fortuitous things may be with respect to us, yet they are all determined and directed by the Lord. When that man drew a bow at a venture, 1 Kings 22:34. it was merely accidental with respect to him, yet it was God that guided the motion of the arrow so as to smite the king of Israel rather than any other man. Nothing then comes to pass, however casual and uncertain it may seem to be, but what was decreed by God.

2. Hence we see God's certain knowledge of all things that happen in the world, seeing his knowledge is founded on his decree. As he sees all things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees all things to come in the glass of his own will ; of his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them ; and of his permitting will, if he hath decreed to suffer them. Hence his declaration of things to come is founded on his appointing them, Isaiah 44:7. ` Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people ? and the things that are coming and shall come ? let them show unto them,' He foreknows the most necessary things according to the course of nature, because he decreed that such effects should proceed front and necessarily follow such and such causes : and he knows all future contingents, all things which shall fall out by chance, and the most free actions of rational creatures, because he decreed that such things should cone to pass contingently or freely, according to the nature of second causes. So that what is casual or contingent with respect to us, is certain and necessary in regard of God.

3. Whoever be the instruments of any good to us, of whatever sort, we must look above them, and eye the hand and counsel of God in it, which is the first spring, and be duly thankful to God for it. And whatever evil of crosses or afflictions befal us, we must look above the instruments of it to God. Affliction doth not rise out of the dust, or come to men by chance ; but it is the Lord that sends it, and we should own and reverence his hand in it. So did David in the day of his extreme distress ; 2 Samuel 16:11. ' Let him alone, and let him curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him.' We should be patient under whatever distress befals us, considering that God is our party, Job 2:10. ' Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' This would be a happy means to still our quarrelings at adverse dispensations. Hence David says, ` I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,' Psalms 39:9.

4. See here the evil of murmuring and complaining at our lot in the world. How apt are ye to quarrel with God, as if he were in the wrong to you, when his dealings with you are not according to your own desires and wishes ? You demand a reason, and call God to an account, Why and I thus ? Why so much afflicted and distressed ? Why so long afflicted ? And why such an affliction rather than another ? Why am I so poor and another so rich ? Thus your hearts rise up against God. But

you should remember, that this is to defame the counsels of infinite wisdom, as if God had not ordered your affairs wisely enough in his eternal counsel. We find the Lord reproving Job for this, Job 40:2. ` Shall he that contendeth with the Lord instruct him ?' When ye murmur and repine under cross and afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove him as if he were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it, as if you had more wisdom and justice to dispose of your lot, and to carve out your own portion in the world. This is upon the matter the language of such a disposition, Had I been on God's counsel, I had ordered this matter better ; things had not been with me as now they are. 0 presume not to correct the infinite wisdom of God, seeing he has decreed all things most wisely and judiciously.

5. There is no reason for people to excuse their sins and falls, from the doctrine of the divine decrees. Wicked men, when they commit some villany or attrocious crime, are apt to plead thus for their excuse, Who can help it ? God would have it so ; it was appointed for me before I was born, so that I could not avoid it. This is a horrid abuse of the divine decrees, as if they did constrain men to sin: Whereas the decree is an immanent act of God, and so can have no influence, physical or moral, upon the wills of men, but leaves them to the liberty and free choice of their own hearts ; and what sinners do, they do most freely and of choice. It is a horrid and detestable wickedness to cast the blame of your sin upon God's decree. This is to charge your villany upon him, as if he were the author of it. It is great folly to cast your sins upon Satan who tempted you, or upon your neighbour who provoked you : but it is a far greater sin, nay, horrid blasphemy, to cast it upon God Himself'. A greater affront than this cannot be offered to the infinite holiness of God.

6. Let the people of God comfort themselves in all cases by this doctrine of the divine decrees ; and, amidst whatever befals them, rest quietly and submissively in the bosom of God, considering that whatever comes or can come to pass, proceeds from the decree of their gracious friend and reconciled Father, who knows what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. 0 what a sweet and pleasant life would ye have under the heaviest pressures of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquillity of mind would you enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how sharp soever it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of his will !

05.38. Ephesians 1:3,4,5, explained...

God Alone Created the World by Thomas Boston This will be evident from the following considerations:

1. The world could not make itself; for that would imply a horrible contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing has no existence, so it have no operation. There must therefore be something which has existence in itself, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if any thing made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a created thing.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused jumble of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in extent, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the particular glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, Isaiah 44:24, "I am the LORD, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by myself." Isaiah 45:12, "I have made the earth, And created man on it. I; My hands; stretched out the heavens, And all their host I have commanded." Isaiah 40:12-13, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as his counselor has taught him?" Job 9:8, "He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea." These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed every thing of the kind that has been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity. By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shows himself to be the true God. Jeremiah 10:11 "Thus you shall say to them: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, And has stretched out the

heavens at His discretion." Psalms 96:5, " All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens." Isaiah 37:16, "You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth." None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united. This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in Scripture as the Creator, 1 Corinthians 7:6, "The Father, of whom are all things." The same claim belongs to the Son, John 1:3, "All things were made by him," [that is to say-] the Word, the Son; John 1:3 "All things were made through Him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." The same honour belongs to the Holy Spirit, as Job 26:13, "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens." Job 33:4 "The Spirit of God has made me," says Elihu, "and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator; and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit are excluded; but because as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be considered in this way: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority: "He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."-In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For, "the Father created all things by Jesus Christ," Ephesians 3:9. And we are told, that "all things were made through him," John 1:3. This work in regard of settlement and ornament, particularly belongs to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, Genesis 1:2, "and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters," to embellish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. This is why it is also said, Job 26:13 "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens."

Chapter 83

06.00. The Crook in the Lot

Thomas Boston The Crook in the Lot

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He has made crooked? "—Ecclesiastes 7:13.

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

06.01. Part 1

Thomas Boston The Crook in the Lot

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He has made crooked? "—Ecclesiastes 7:13. A just view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them; and that view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense; for it is the light of the world alone that represents them justly, discovering in them the work of God, and consequently, designs becoming the Divine perfections. When they are perceived by the eye of faith, and duly considered, we have a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view that Solomon, in the preceding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in favor of certain things, that, to the eye of sense, looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore generally reputed previous and shocking. He pronounces the day of one's death to be better than the day of his birth; namely, the day of the death of one, who, having become the friend of God through faith, has led a life to the honor of God, and service of his generation, and in this way raised to himself the good and savvy name better than precious ointment. In like manner, he pronounces the house of mourning to be preferable to the house of feasting, sorrow to laughter, and a wise man's rebuke to a fool's song. As for that, even though the latter are indeed the more pleasant, yet the former are the more profitable. And observing with concern, how men are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns and ill-usage, oppression making a wise man mad, but also from its smiles and caresses, a gift destroying the heart. Therefore, since whatever way it goes there is danger, he pronounces the end of every worldly thing better than the beginning of it. And from the whole he justly infers, that it is better to be humble and patient than proud and impatient under afflicting dispensation; since, in the former case, we wisely submit to what is really best; in the latter, we fight against it. And he dissuades from being angry with our lot, because of the adversity found in it. He cautions against making odious comparisons of former and present times, in that point insinuating undue reflections on the providence of God: and, against that querulous and fretful disposition. He first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables us to make the best of everything, and even gives life in killing circumstances; and then a particular remedy, consisting in a due application of that wisdom, towards taking a just view of the case: "Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He has made crooked?" In which words are proposed, 1. The remedy itself; 2. The suitableness of it.

1. The remedy itself is a wise eyeing of the hand of God in all we find to bear hard on us: "Consider the work of God," namely, in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of your lot, the crosses you find in it. You see very well the cross itself. Yea, you turn it over and over in your mind and leisurely view it on all sides. You look to this and the other second cause of it, and so you are in a foam and a fret. But, would you be quieted and satisfied in the matter, lift up your eyes towards heaven, see the doing of God in it, the operation of His hand. Look at that, and consider it

well; eye the first cause of the crook in your lot; behold how it is the work of God, His doing.

2. Such a view of the crook in our lot is very suitable to still improper risings of heart, and quiet us under them: "For who can make that straight which God has made crooked?" As to the crook in your lot, God has made it; and it must continue while He will have it so. Should you ply your utmost force to even it, or make it straight, your attempt will be vain: it will not change for all you can do. Only He who made it can mend it, or make it straight. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means at once to silence and to satisfy men, and so bring them to a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now, we take up the purpose of the text under these three heads.

I. Whatever crook there is in our lot, it is of God’s making.

II. What God sees fit to mar, no one will be able to mend in his lot.

III. The considering of the crook in the lot as the work of God, or of His making, is a proper means to bring us to a Christian deportment under it.

I. Whatever crook there is in our lot, it is of God’s making.

Here, two things are to be considered, namely, the crook itself, and God’s making of it.

1. As to the crook itself, the crook in the lot, for the better understanding of it, these few things that follow are premised.

First. There is a certain train or course of events, by the providence of God, falling to every one of us during our life in this world. And that is our lot, as being allotted to us by the sovereign God, our Creator and Governor, "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways. " This train of events is widely different to different persons, according to the will and pleasure of the sovereign Manage, who orders men’s condition in the world in a great variety, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere.

Second. In that train or course of events, some fall out, cross to us, and against the grain; and these make the crook in our lot. While we are here, there will be cross events, as well as agreeable ones, in our lot and condition. Sometimes things are softly and agreeably gliding on; but, by and by, there is some incident which alters that course, grates us, and panes us, as, when we have made a wrong step we begin to limp.

Third. Everybody’s lot in this world has some crook in it. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons. They look about, and take a distant view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it but what is straight, and just to one’s wish; so they pronounce their neighbor’s lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict; there is no perfection here; no lot out of heaven without a crook. For, as to "all the works that are done under the sun, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. " Who would have thought but that Haman’s lot was very straight, while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honor, being prime minister of state in the Persian court, and standing high in the king’s favor? Yet there was, at the saline time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that "all this availed him nothing. " Every one feels for himself, when he is pinched, though others do not perceive it.

Nobody’s lot, in this world, is wholly crooked; there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed, when men’s passions, having gotten up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, all is wrong with them, nothing right. But, though in hell that tale is and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world. For there, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed; but here it always holds good, that "it is of the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed. "

Fourth. The crook in the lot came into the world by sin: it is owing to the fall, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" under which death the crook in the lot is comprehended, as a state of comfort or prosperity is, in Scripture style, expressed by living. Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, that they became crooked in respect of the holy law; and God justly so bowed their lot, that it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven’s gates.

These being premised, a crook in the lot speaks, in general, two things, (1.) Adversity, (2.) Continuance. Accordingly it makes the day of adversity, opposed in the day of prosperity, in the verse immediately following the text. The crook in the lot, is, First, some one or other piece of adversity. The prosperous part of one’s lot, which goes forward according to one’s wish, is the straight and even part of it; the adverse part, going a contrary way, is the crooked part of it. God has intermixed these two in men’s condition in this world; that, as there is some prosperity in it, making the straight line, so there is also some adversity, making the crooked. This mixture has place, not only in the lot of saints, who are told, that "in the world they shall have tribulation, " but even in the lot of all, as already observed. Secondly, it is adversity of some continuance. We do not reckon it a crooked thing, which, though forcibly bent and bowed together, yet presently recovers its former straightness. These are twinges of the rod of adversity, which passed like a stitch on one’s side, all is immediately set to right’s again; one’s lot may be suddenly overclouded, and the cloud vanish before he is aware. But under the crook, one having leisure to find his smart, is in some concern to get the crook made straight. So the crook in the lot is adversity, continued for a shorter or longer time.

Now there is a threefold crook in the lot incident to the children of men.

1. One made by a cross dispensation, which, however in itself passing, yet has lasting effects. Such a crook did Herod’s cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in Bethlehem, who by the murderers were left "weeping for their slain children, and would not be comforted, because they were not. " A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go limping ever after. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net: so are the sons of men snared in an evil time. " A thing may fall out in a moment under which the party shall go halting to the grave.

2. There is a crook made by a train of cross dispensation, whether of the same or different kinds, following hard on one another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus in the case of Job, while one messenger of evil tidings was yet speaking, another came. Cross events coming one on the neck of another, deep calling to deep, make a sore crook. In that case, the part is like one who recovering his sliding foot from one unfirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too; or, like one who, travelling in an unknown mountainous track, after having with difficulty made his way over one mountain, is expected to see the plain country; but instead there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. This crook is Asaph’s lot nearly to have made him give up all his religion, until he "went into the sanctuary,"

where this mystery of providence was unriddled to him. Solomon observes, "That there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked. " Providence taking a run against them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they are to whose life in no part of it affords them experience of this, surely Joseph missed not of it in his young days, nor Jacob in his middle days, nor Peter in his old days, nor our Savior all His days.

3. There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with lasting effects of it coming in the room of another removed. This crook straightened, there is another made in its place: and so there is still a crook. Lack of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot. That was at length made even to her mind; but then she got another in its stead, hard labor in travailing to bring forth. This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station changed; but the move will be out of one wilderness to another. When one part of the lot is made even, quickly some other part of it will be crooked.

More particularly, the crook in the lot has in it four things of the nature of that which is crooked.

(1.) Disagreeableness. A crooked thing is wayward; and, being laid to a rule, answers it not, but declines from it. There is not, in anybody's lot, any such thing as a crook, in respect of the will and purposes of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot and lay it to the eternal decree, made in the depth of infinite wisdom before the world began, and it will answer it exactly, without the least deviation, "all things being worked after the counsel of His will. " Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony. If Paul is to be bound at Jerusalem, and "delivered into the hands of the Gentiles," it is "the will of the Lord it should be so." Therefore the greatest crook of the lot on earth is straight in heaven. There is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every person's lot there is a crook in respect of their mind and natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no means answer it, nor harmonise with it. When Divine Providence lays the one to the other, there is a manifest disagreeableness—the man's will goes one way, and the dispensation another way—the will bends upwards, and cross events press down: so they are contrary. And there, and only there, lies the crook. It is this disagreeableness which makes the crook in the lot fit matter of trial and exercise to us in this our state of probation: in which, if you would approve yourself to God, walking by faith, not by sight, you must quiet yourself in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that it should be according to your mind.

(2) Unsightliness. Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye; and no crook in the lot seems to be joyous, but grievous, making an unsightly appearance. Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their thoughts to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. David shows a hurtful experience of his, in that kind. "While I was musing the fire burned " Jacob acted a wiser part, called his youngest son Benjamin, the son of the right hand, whom the dying mother had named Benoni, the son of my sorrow. By this means providing that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed, a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook in his lot in the light of the holy Word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden sightliness in it, under a very unsightly outward appearance; perceiving the suitableness of it to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interests of the party; by which means one comes to take pleasure, and that a most refined pleasure, in distress.

But whatever the crook in the lot is to the eye of faith, it is not all pleasant to the eye of sense.

(3.) Unfitness for motion. Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame; "The legs of the lame are not equal." This uneasiness they find, who are exercised about the crook in their lot: a high spirit and a low adverse lot makes great difficulty in the Christian walk. There is nothing that gives temptation more easy access than the crook in the lot; nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore, says the apostle, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." They who are laboring under it are to be pitied, then, and not to be rigidly censured; though they are rare persons who learn this lesson, till taught by their own experience. It is long since Job made an observation in this case, which holds good to this day; He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

(4.) Aptness to catch hold and entangle, like hooks, "fish-hooks." The crook in the lot does so very readily make impression, to be ruffling and fretting one’s spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it for these dangerous purposes; which point once gained by the tempter, the tempted, before he is aware, finds himself entangled as in a thicket, out of which he does not know how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick troubling a standing pool, which not only raises up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of blasphemy and atheism in Asaph’s case; "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence: " as if he had said, there is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing, that profits nothing; I was a fool to have been in care about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! is this the pious Asaph? How is he turned so quite unlike himself! But the crook in the lot is a handle by which the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption even in the best. This is the nature of the crook in the lot; let us now observe what part of the lot it falls in. Three conclusions may be established upon this head.

First. It may fall in any part of the lot; there is no exempted one in the case: for, sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being "all as an unclean thing, we all fade as a leaf: " The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels in the case of different persons. And in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that will prove a sinking weight to one, which another would go very lightly under.

Secondly. It may at once fall into many parts of the lot, the Lord calling, as in a solemn day, one’s terrors round about. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man’s lot; but its name may be Gad, being but the forerunner of a troop which comes. Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream, let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him from another quarter, till in the end the waters break in on every hand.

Thirdly. It often falls in the tender part; I mean, that part of the lot in which one is least able to bear it, or at least thinks he is so. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it. But it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance." If there is any one part of the lot which of all others one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God; in that thing in which he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him; for there is the grand competition with Christ. "I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that upon which they set their minds. " Since the crook in

the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which of an things most rivals him. But more particularly, the crook may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

First, in the natural part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by the great God that formed an things. The parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, were formed together sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body; but in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make the crook in the lot of some. They have something unsightly or grievous about them. Crooks of this kind, more or less observable, are very common and ordinary; and the best are not exempted from them; and it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. Tender eyes made the crook in the lot of Leah. Rachel's beauty was balanced with barrenness, the crook in her lot. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was it should seem, no personable man, but a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to condemn him. Timothy was of a weak and sickly frame. And there is a yet far more considerable crook in the lot of the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb. Some are weak to a degree in their intellects; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably bemisted and darkened, from the crazy bodies they are lodged in. An eminent instance of which we have in the grave, wise, and patient Job, "going mourning without the sun; yea, standing up and crying in the congregation. "

Secondly, it may fall in the honorary past. There is an honor due to all men, the small as well as the great, and that upon the ground of the original constitution of human nature, as it was framed in the image of God. But in the sovereign disposal of holy Providence, the crook in the lot of some fans here; they are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk. This sometimes is the natural consequence of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as in the case of Dinah, who, by her gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for, a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honor. But where the Lord intends a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natured world; neither will true merit be able to make head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus David represents his case. "They that saw me without, fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many. "

Thirdly, it may fall in the vocational part. Whatever is a man's calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take it's place in it. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, but most unsuccessful. Jeremiah met with such a train of discouragements and ill usage in the exercise of his sacred function, that he was very near giving it up, saying, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his none. " The Psalmist observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who sow in the fields; and at times "God blesses them - and does not allow their cattle to decrease. But again, they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction and sorrow. " Such a crook was made in Job's lot after he had long stood even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence; the husbandman carefully laboring his ground; the sheep-master, "diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds;" the tradesman early and late at his business; the merchant diligently plying his, watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there

is such a crook in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means make even. For why? The most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant without a word of Divine appointment, commanding their success. "Who is he that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord does not command it? " People ply their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face. Providence crosses their enterprises, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavors unsuccessful, and so puts and keeps them still in straitened circumstances. "So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise." Providence interposing, crooks the measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, and the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread; while in the mean time, some one of other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct, and ability, the slow gain the race and carry the prize; the weak win the battle and enrich themselves with the spoil; and bread falls into the lap of the fool.

Lastly, it may fall in the relational part. Relations are the joints of society; and there the crook in the lot may take place, one's smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their nature the springs of man's comfort; yet, they often turn the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relation. Thus a crook was made in the lot of Jacob, by means of the death of Rachel, his beloved wife, and the loss of Joseph, his son and darling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. Job laments this crook in his lot, "You have made desolate all my company; " meaning his dear children, every one of whom he had laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is made through the afflicting hand of God lying heavy on them: which, in virtue of their relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, "Have mercy on me, O Lord; my daughter is grievously vexed." Ephraim felt the smart of family afflictions, "when he called his son's name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. " Since all is not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, it can hardly miss but the more of these springs of comfort are opened to a man, he must at one time or other find he has but the more sources of sorrows to gush out and spring in on him; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them. And, finally, the crook is sometimes made here by their proving uncomfortable through the disagreeableness of their temper and disposition. There was a crook in Job's lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife. In Abigail's by means of a surly, ill-tempered husband. In Eli's through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children. In Jonathan's through the furious temper of his father. So do men oftentimes find their greatest cross where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin has unhinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in a neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive, and discountenancers of that which is good, and subjects turbulent and seditious. All these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives. And thus far of the crook itself.

II. Having seen the crook itself, we are in the next place to consider of God's making it. And here is to be shown, 1. That it is of God's making. 2. How it is of his making. 3. Why he makes it.

First. That the crook in the lot, whatever it is, is of God's making appears from these three considerations.

First, It cannot be questioned but the crook in the lot, considered as a crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the matter of it; that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, are sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment of affliction. Now, as it may be, as such, holily and justly brought on us, by our Sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the doing or making of it. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, it is evident, from the Scripture doctrines of divine providence, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts of it. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about in whatever way he lists. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that He did in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places. " There is not anything whatever befalls us without his overruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, brings us to, and fixes us in the condition and place allotted for us, by him who "has determined the times and the bounds of our habitation. " It overrules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as "hairs of our head being all numbered;" a "lot cast into the lap. " Yea, the free acts of our will, by which we choose for ourselves: for even "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as rivers of water. "And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. " And this, whether these steps causing the crook are deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph s brothers selling him into Egypt; or whether they are undesigned, such as manslaughter purely casual, as when one hewing wood kills his neighbor with "the head of the axe slipping from the helve. " For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider does a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's lameness is the true and proper cause; wherefore in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, and in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbor's hand.

Lastly, God has, by an eternal decree, immovable as mountains of brass appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked part of it, as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, by which the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and the depths, the prosperity and adversity, in the lot of the inhabitants of there determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness there. The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts of it, the building reared up of God, in exact conformity to the plan in his decree, "who works all things after the counsel of his own will. " So that there is never a crook in one's lot but may be run up to this original. Of this Job piously sets us an example in his own case: "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desires, even that he does. For he performs the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him. "

Second. That we may see how the crook in the lot is of God's making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks and impure sinful ones.

First, there are pure and sinless crooks; which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses, grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such was Lazarus's poverty, Rachel's barrenness, Leah's tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been so from his birth. Now, the crooks of this kind are of God's making, by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass and causing them to be. He is

the maker of the poor. "Whoso mocks the poor, reproaches his Maker; " that is, reproaches God who made him poor, according to that, "The Lord makes poor. " It is he that has the key of the womb, and as he sees meet shuts it, or opens it. And it is "He that forms the eyes. " And the man was "born blind, that the works of God should be made manifest in him. " Therefore he says to Moses, "who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? " Such crooks in the lot are of God's making in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct effects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth.

Secondly, There are impure sinful crooks, which, in their own nature, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in David's lot, through his family disorders, the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in Job's lot, by the Sabeans and Chaldeans taking away his substance and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of David and Job respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments of it. Thus one and the same thing may be to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt, and to another an affliction laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as those of the former; for He neither puts evil in the heart of any, nor stirs up to it. "He cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man. " But they are of his making, by his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and wise overruling of them to some good end.

1st. He holily permits them, suffering men "to walk in their own ways." Though He is not the author of those sinful crooks, causing them to be, by the efficacy of His power; yet, if He did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for "He shuts and no man opens. " But He justly withholds His grace which the sinner does not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and since the sinner will be gone, lays the reins on his neck, and leaves him to swing of his lust. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. " "Israel would none of Me: so I gave them up to their own heart's lusts. " In which unhappy situation the sinful crook does, from the sinner's own proper motion, naturally and infallibly follow; even as water runs down a hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So in these circumstances, "Israel walked in their own counsels. " And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just judge, punishing the sufferer by it. This view of the matter silenced David under Shimei's cursings; "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him. "

2ndly. He powerfully bounds them. "The remainder of wrath" (that is, the creature's wrath) "you shall restrain. " Did not God bound these crooks, however sore they are in any one's case, they would be yet sorer. But He says to the sinful instrument, as He said to the sea, "Until this time you shall come, but no further; and here your proud waves shall be stayed. " He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Thus it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as He by His powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance of this we have in the case of Job, whose lot was crooked through a peculiar agency of the devil; but even to that grand sinner God set a bound in the case: "The Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him. " Now, Satan went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass of it untouched, which he saw could make for his purpose. But he could by no means move one step beyond it to carry his point, which he could not gain within it. And therefore, to make the trial greater, and the crook sorer, nothing remains but that the bound

set should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he says, "But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face;" and it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, "Behold, he is in your hand, but save his life;" the crook was carried to the utmost that the new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing Job to blaspheme; "Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. " And had it not been for this bound, securing Job's life, he, after finding this attempt unsuccessful too, had doubtless despatched him at once.

3rdly. He wisely overrules them to some good purpose, becoming the Divine perfections. While the sinful instrument has an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of David's family Amnon's design was to gratify a brutish lust; Absalom's to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition; but God meant by that means to punish David for his sin in the matter of Uriah. In the crook made in Job's lot, by Satan, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans, his instruments, Satan's design was to cause Job to blaspheme, and theirs to gratify their covetousness; but God had another design in this way becoming Himself, namely, to manifest Job's sincerity and uprightness. Did he not wisely and powerfully overrule those crooks made in men's lot, no good could come out of them, hut He always overrules them so as to fulfil His own holy purposes in this way (howbeit the sinner means not so); for His designs cannot miscarry, His "counsel shall stand." So the sinful crook is, by the overruling hand of God, turned about to His own glory and His people's good in the end. According to the word, "The Lord has made all things for Himself. " "All things work together for the good to them that love God. " Thus Haman's plot for the destruction of the Jews "was turned to the contrary. " And the crook made in Joseph's lot, by his own brothers selling him into Egypt, though it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet, as it was of God's making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wisely overruling it, had an issue well becoming the Divine wisdom and goodness; both of which Joseph notices to them: "As for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it to good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to keep many people alive. "

III. It remains to inquire why God makes a crook in one's lot? And this is to be cleared by discovering the design of that dispensation: a matter which it concerns every one to know, and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The design of it seems to be chiefly sevenfold.

First, the trial of one's state, whether one is in the state of grace or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here I conceive lies the main providential trial a man is brought into, with reference to his state; forasmuch as the crook in the lot being a matter of continued course, one has occasion to open and show himself again and again in the same thing; from where it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision in that momentous point. It was plainly on this foundation that the trial of Job's state was put. The question was, whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God himself testified of him: or but a mercenary one, a hypocrite, as Satan alleged against him? And the trial of this was put on the crook to be made in his lot. Accordingly, that which all his friends, save Elihu, the last speaker, did, in their reasonings with him under his trial, aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite; Satan thus making use of these good men for gaining his point. As God made trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a trial of afflicting dispensations, which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously, were declared suitable to enter the promised land, as having followed the

Lord fully; while others being tried out with them, their carcasses fell in the wilderness; so He makes trial of men for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proved to be; if not, he is but a hypocrite; he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace. A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honor and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Savior, to know "what he should do that he might inherit eternal life. " Our Savior, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all that he had, and follow Him: "Sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross and follow Me. " By this means he was at that moment, in the court of conscience, stripped of his great possession; so that from that time forward he could no longer keep them with a good conscience, as he might have done before. The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot; "he was sad at that saying; " that is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder, and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and lowering, as the same word is used. He could not stand the test of that crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God in that point, but behoved to have it, at any rate, according to his own mind. So he "went away grieved, for he had great possessions. " He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it a violent possessor before the Lord, thwarting the Divine order. And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, or that ever he came to a better temper in reference to it.

Secondly, excitation to duty, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came to themselves, settled, and turned serious. Going for a time like a wild ass used to the wilderness, scorning to be turned, their foot has slid in due time; and a crook being by that means made in their lot, their mouth has come wherein they have been caught. Thus was the prodigal brought to himself, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning to his father. The crook in their lot convinces them at length that their rest is not here. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whenever they lay down their head where they would fain take rest in the creature, and that they are obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude there is no hope from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way, so it makes them errands to God, which they did not have before; forasmuch as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore, whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, "Arise and depart, this is not your rest. "And it is surely that which of all means of mortification, of the afflictive king, most deadens a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, conviction of sin. As when one walking heedlessly is suddenly taken ill of a lameness: his going halting the rest of his way convinces him of having made a wrong step; and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind. So God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he has made, or course he has taken. What the sinner would otherwise be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook, men's sin finds them out to their conviction, "as the thief is ashamed when he

is found." The which Joseph’s brothers feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt: "we are verily guilty concerning our brother;" "God has found out the iniquity of your servants." The crook in the lot usually in its nature of circumstances, so naturally refers to the false step or course, that it serves for a providential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner’s folly, in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban’s unfair dealing, palmed on him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had, seven years at least before, put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder; and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac’s eyes favoured the former cheat; and the darkness of the evening did as much favor the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adoni-bezek in another case, "As I have done, so God has requited me. " In like manner, Rachel, dying in childbirth, could hardly avoid a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, "Give me children, or else I die. " Even holy Job read, in the crook in his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth, many years before: "You write bitter things against me, and make me possess the iniquities of my youth. "

Fourthly, correction, or punishment, for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot is that word verified, "Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you. " God may, for a time, wink at one’s sin which afterward he will set a brand of his indignation upon, in crooking the sinner’s lot, as he did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the Divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and sore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. David’s killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over; but for that cause "the sword never departed from his house." Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman, in the way of falsehood and lying; but as a lasting mark of the Divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which crave to him while he lived, and to his posterity after him. This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man’s person may be accepted in the Beloved, who yet has a particular badge of the Divine displeasure, with his sin hung on him in the crook of his lot. "You were a God that forgave them, though you took vengeance on their inventions. "

Fifthly, preventing of sin. "I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. " The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party; so it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world specially take and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men; but by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, by which it loses its former taking appearance. Thus, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner, after "gadding about so much to change his way, resuming ashamed " Thus the Lord crooks one’s lot that "he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from men;" and so "he keeps back his soul from the pit. " Every one knows what is most pleasant to him; but God alone knows what is most profitable. As all men are liars, so all men are fools too. He is the only wise God. Many are

obliged to the crook in their lot, that they do not go to those excesses which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to; and they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal of it. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, discovery of latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which lie, as it were, so near the surface, that they are ready on every turn to rise up; but then there are others also which lie so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum rise up, appear on top, and run over; so the crook in the lot raises up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherwise one could hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek Moses as he discovered at the waters at strife, and for which he was kept out of Canaan? Or so much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job, as to charge God with becoming cruel to Him? So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah, as to curse not only the day of his birth, but even the man who brought tidings of it to his father? Or such a tang of atheism is Asaph, as to pronounce religion a vain thing? But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, showed them to have been within, how long so-ever they had lurked unobserved. And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in no way inconsistent with the Divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to stain the pride of all glory, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long-continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness; even to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart.

Seventhly, the exercise of grace in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces lie dormant for the time. Besides, there are some graces which of their own nature are but occasional in their exercise, as being exercised only upon occasion of certain things which they have a necessary relation to, such as patience and long-suffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces, overpowered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action the occasional graces, ministering proper occasions for them. The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of Providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good. And if the grace of God is in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that however it makes him stagger for awhile, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. "You are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, may be found unto praise. " The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, partings, and groanings, which otherwise would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, however by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long run. However it may be the persons themselves often can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. The steady routing of a gallant army or horse and foot to the routing of the enemy is highly prized; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose

judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. This the Psalmist teaches: "He delights not in the strength of the horse; He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." And indeed the exercise of the graces of his Spirit in his people is so very precious in His sight, that whatever grace any of them excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot as will be a special trial of it, that will make a proof of its full strength. Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God's bare word of promise above the dictates of sense; and God, giving him a promise that he would make of him a great nation, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough ado with all the strength of his faith; while he was obliged to leave his country and kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites; his wife continuing barren, till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and that it was declared, that in Isaac only his seed should be called. "Moses was very meek above all the men which were on the face of the earth." And he was entrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his meekness. Job excelled in patience, and by the crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but some time or other he will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

Now, the use of this doctrine is threefold. (1.) For reproof. (2.) For consolation. And (3.) for exhortation.

Use 1. For reproof. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reprovable.

First, The carnal and earthly, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as of God's making. There is certainly a signature of the Divine hand on it to be perceived by just observers; and that challenges an awful regard, the neglect of which forebodes destruction. "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up. " And in that they are deeply guilty, who, pouring on second causes, and looking no further than the unhappy instruments of the crook in their lot, overlook the first cause; as a dog snarls at the stone, but does not look to the hand that casts it. This is, in effect, to make a God of the creature; so regarding it, as if it could of itself effect anything, while in the mean time it is but an instrument in the hand of God, "the rod of His anger. " "Ordained of Him for judgment, established for correction. " Oh! Why should men terminate their view on the instruments of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges? The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be pitied, as having an undesirable office, which for their gratifying their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, returns on their own head at length with a vengeance, as did "the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu. " And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the case of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument as on God's part, but very different; witness Shimei's cursing David as a bloody man, meaning the blood of the house of Saul, which he was not guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of Uriah, which he could not deny. Moreover, the quarrel will be, at length, taken up between God and His people; and then their scourgers will find they had but a thankless office. "I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction, " says God, in resentment of the heathen crooking the lot of His people. In like manner are they guilty who impute the crook in their lot to fortune, or their ill-luck, which in very deed is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep man from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the

Philistines doubted, they do more impiously determine, saying, in effect, "It is not His hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened to us. " And, finally, those also are guilty, who, in the way of giving up themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and to forget it. I question not, but one committing his case to the Lord, and looking to Him for remedy, in the first place, may lawfully call in the moderate use of the comforts of life for help in the second place. But as for that course so frequent and usual in this case among carnal men, if the crook of the lot really is, as indeed it is, of God's making, it must needs be a most indecent, unbecoming course, to be abhorred of all good men. 'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord." It is surely a very desperate method of cure, which cannot miss of issuing in something worse than the disease, however it may palliate it for awhile. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine: and it was revealed in my ears, by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die. "

Secondly, the unsubmissive, whose hearts, like the troubled sea, swell and boil fret and murmur, and cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The apostle Jude, characterising some, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, " says of them, "these are murmurers, complainers," namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word here used by the Holy Ghost. For, since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God's making, this their practice must needs be a fighting against God. And these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against Him, whatever face they put on them. Thus when the Israelites murmur against Moses, God charges them with murmuring against Himself. "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmured against Me? " Ah! May not He who made and fashioned us without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too, without asking our mind, but we must rise up against Him on account of the crook made in it? What does this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God's work, nor bear what He has done? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit! How is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course? "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who has hardened himself against him and has prospered? "

Thirdly, the careless and unfruitful, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since he makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, "Hear the rod. " And, indeed, if one did not shut his own eyes, but is willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design of it to be, to wean him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his heart's rest in God. And nature and the circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard make to a more particular discovery of the design of it. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in spiritual sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of Providence in the crook; so he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him by the great Husbandman in the dispensation are lost. ' They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty;" groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and weight of the hand of the instrument of it: "But none said, What is God my Maker?" they look not, they turn not to God.

Use 2. For consolation. It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making; and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your Father who has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcomes his father's rod, knowing that, being a father, he seeks his benefit in this way; and

shall not God’s children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake His measures, to work for their good, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured to Christ’s children by the promise of the Father. "If His children forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, then I will visit their transgressions with the rod." Furthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God, under the crook in their lot may take comfort in this, let them know that there is no crook in their lot but they may be made straight; for God made it, surely then He can mend it. He himself can make straight what He has made crooked, though none other can. There is nothing too hard for Him to do: "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dung-hill; that he may set him with princes. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. " Do not say that your crook has been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it, that He may mend it, and wait on Him. And if it is for your good that it should be mended, it shall be mended; for "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. "

Use 3. For exhortation. Since the crook in the lot is of God’s making, then, eyeing the hand of God in yours, be reconciled to it, and submit under it whatever it is. I say, eyeing the hand of God in it, for otherwise your submission under the crook in your lot cannot be a Christian submission, acceptable to God, having no reference to Him as your party in the matter.

Object. 1. But some will say, ’The crook in my lot is from the hand of the creature; and such a one too as I deserted no such treatment from."

Ans. From what has been already said, it appears that, although the crook in your lot is indeed immediately from the creature’s hand, yet it is mediately from the hand of God; being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but the Lord has done it. Therefore without all peradventure, God Himself is the principal party, whoever is the less principal. And although you have not deserved your crook at the hand of the instrument which He makes use of for your correction, you certainly deserve it at His hand; and He may make use of what instrument He will in the matter, or may do it immediately by Himself, even as seems good in His sight.

Object. II. "But the crook in my lot might quickly be evened, if the instrument or instruments of it pleased: only there is no dealing with them, so as to convince them of their fault in making it."

Ans. If it is so, be sure God’s time is not as yet come that the clock should be made even; for if it were come, though they stand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a sandy bank under one’s foot; "they would bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. " Meanwhile, that state of the matter is so far from justifying one’s not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot, that it makes a piece trial in which His hand very eminently appears, namely, that men should be signally injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We do not offend: because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice. " They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet would they own no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they verily blameless in their devouring the Lord’s straying sheep? No, surely, they were not. Did they look on themselves as ministers of the Divine justice against her? No, they did not.

Some indeed would make a question here, How the adversaries of the church could celebrate her God as the habitation of justice? But the original pointing of the text being retained, it appears that there is no ground at all for this question here, and withal the whole matter is set in a clear light. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We do not offend: because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice. " These last are not the words of the adversaries, but the words of the prophet showing how it came to pass that the adversaries devoured the Lord’s sheep, as they lighted on them, and withal stood to the defence of it, when they had done, far from acknowledging any wrong; the matter lay here, the sheep had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice; and, as a just punishment of this from His hand, they could have no justice at the hand of their adversaries.

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which has bowed their lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to and submit under the crook, whatever it is, saying from the heart, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. " And to move you to this consider,

1. It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign Lord and Benefactor. His sovereignty challenges our submission, and it can in no case be meanness of spirit to submit to the crook which His hand has made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that He has laid on; but it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And His beneficence to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouth from complaining of His making a crook in our lot, who would have done us no wrong had He made the whole of it crooked. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? "

06.01a. Part 1 cont'd

2. It is an unalterable statute, for the time of this life, that nobody shall want a crook in their lot; for "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. " And those who are designed for heaven are in a special manner assured of a crook in theirs, "that in the world they shall have tribulation;" for by means of it the Lord makes them suitable for heaven. And how can you imagine that you shall be exempted from the common lot of mankind? "Shall the rock be removed out of his place for you? " And since God makes the crooks in men’s lot according to the different exigency of their cases, you may be sure that yours is necessary for you.

3. A crook in the lot, which one can by no means submit to, makes a condition of all things the likest to that in hell. For there a yoke, which the wretched sufferers can neither bear nor shake off, is wreathed about their necks; there the almighty arm draws against them, and they against it; there they are ever suffering and ever sinning; still in the furnace, but their dross not consumed, nor they purified. Even such is the case of those who now cannot submit to the crook in their lot.

4. Great is the loss by not submitting to it. The crook in the lot, rightly improved, has turned to the best account, and made the best time to some that ever they had all their life long, as the Psalmist from his own experience testifies: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept Your word. " There are many now in heaven who are blessing God for the crook they had in their lot here. What a sad thing must it then be to lose this teeth-wind for Immanuel’s land! But if the crook in your lot does you no good, be sure it will not miss doing you great damage. It will greatly increase your guilt and aggravate your condemnation, while it shall for ever cut you to the heart, to think of the pains taken by means of the crook in the lot to wean you from the world and bring you to God, but all in vain. Take heed, therefore, how you manage it, "Lest you mourn at the last and say, How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! "

Prop II. What God sees suitable to mar, we shall not be able to mend in our lot. What crook God makes in our lot, we shall not be able to even.—We shall, 1. Show God’s marring and making a crook in one’s lot, as He sees fitting.

II. We shall consider men’s attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot.

III. In what sense it is to be understood that we shall not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot.

IV. Render some reasons of the point.

I. As the first head, namely, to show God’s marring and making a crook in one’s lot, as he sees fitting.

First, God keeps the choice of every one’s crook to Himself; and therein He exerts His sovereignty. It is not left to our option what that crook shall be, or what our peculiar burden; but, as the potter makes of the same clay one vessel for one use, another for another use; so God makes one crook for one, another for another, according to His own will and pleasure. "Whatever the Lord pleased,

that He did in heaven and in earth. " &c.

Secondly, He sees and observes the bias of every one’s will and inclination, how it lies, and where it especially bends away from Himself, and consequently where it needs the special bow; so He did in that man’s case. "One thing you lack; go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor. " &c. Observe the bent of His heart to His great possession. He takes notice what is that idol that in every one’s case is most apt to be His rival, that so He may suit the trial to the case, making the crook there.

Thirdly, by the conduct of His providence, or a touch of His hand, He gives that part of one’s lot a bow the contrary way; so that henceforth it lies quite contrary to the bias of the party’s will. And here the trial is made, the bent of the will lying one way, and that part of one’s lot another, that it does not answer the inclination of the party, but thwarts it.

Fourthly, He wills that crook in the lot to remain while He sees fitting, for a longer or shorter time, just according to the holy ends He designs it for. By that will it is so fixed, that the whole creation cannot alter it, or put it out of the bow.

II. We shall consider men’s attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot. This, in a word, lies in their making efforts to bring their lot in that point to their own will, that they may both go one way; so it imports three things.

First, A certain uneasiness under the crook in the lot; it is a yoke which is hard for the party to bear, till his spirit is tamed and subdued. "You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn me and I shall be turned." &c. And it is for the breaking down of the weight of one’s spirit that God lays it on: for which cause it is declared to be a good thing to bear it, that being the way to make one at length as a weaned child.

Secondly, A strong desire to have the cross removed, and to have matters in that part going according to our inclinations. This is very natural, nature desiring to be freed from everything that is burdensome or cross to it; and if that desire is kept in a due subordination to the will of God, and it is not too pre-emptory, it is not sinful. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will." &c. Hence so many accepted prayers of the people of God, for the removal of me crook in their lot.

Thirdly, An earnest use of means for that end. This naturally follows on that desire. The man, being pressed with the cross which is in his crook, labours all he can in the use of means to be rid of it. And if the means used are lawful, and not relied on, but followed with an eye to God in them, the attempt is not sinful, whether he succeed in the use of them or not.

III. In what sense it is to be understood that we shall not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot.

It is not to be understood as if the case were absolutely hopeless, and that there is no remedy for the crook in our lot. For there is no case so desperate, but God may right it. "Is anything too hard for the Lord? " When the crook has continued long, and spurned all remedies one has used for it, one is ready to lose hope about it; but many a crook, given over for hopeless that would never mend, God has made perfectly straight, as in Job’s case. But we shall never be able to mend it ourselves; if the Lord Himself does not take it in hand to remove it, it will stand before us

immovable, like a mountain of brass, though perhaps it may be in itself a thing that might easily be removed. We take it up in these three things:

I . It will never do by the mere force of our hand. "For, by strength shall no man prevail. " The most vigorous endeavors we can use will not even the crook, if God give it not a touch of His hand; so that all endeavors that way, without an eye to God, are vain and fruitless, and will be but ploughing on the rock.

2. The use of all allowable means for it will be successless unless the Lord bless them for that end. "Who is He that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord does not command it?" As one may eat and not be satisfied, so one may use means proper for evening the crook in his lot, and yet prevail nothing. For nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor torches to men of understanding, "&c.

It will never do in our time, but in God’s time, which seldom is so early as ours. "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. " Hence that crook remains sometimes immovable, as if it were kept by an invisible hand; and at another time it goes away with a touch, because God’s time is come for evening it.

IV. We shall now assign the reasons of the point.

1st. Because of the absolute dependence we have on God. As the light depends on the sun, or the shadow on the body, so we depend on God, and without Him can do nothing, great or small. And God will have us to find it so, to teach us our dependence.

2ndly. Because His will is irresistible. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. " When God wills one thing, and the creature the contrary, it is easy to see which will must be done. When the omnipotent arm holds, in vain does the creature draw. "Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered? "

Inference 1. There is a necessity of yielding and submitting to the crook in our lot; for we may as well think to remove the rocks and mountains, which God has settled, as to make that part of our lot straight which He has made crooked.

2. The evening of the crook in our lot, by main force of our own, is but a cheat we put on ourselves, and will not last, but, like a stick by main force made straight, it will quickly return to the bow again.

3. The only effectual way of getting the crook evened is to apply to God for it.

Exhortation 1. Let us then apply to God for removing any crook in our lot, that in the settled order of things may be removed. Men cannot cease to desire the removal of a crook, more than that of a thorn in the flesh. But, since we are not able to mend what God sees fitting to mar, it is evident we are to apply to Him that made it to amend it, and not take the evening of it in our own hand.

Motive 1. All our attempts for its removal will, without Him, be vain and fruitless. Let us be as resolute as we will to have it evened, if God say it not, we will labor in vain. However fair the means we use bid for it, they will be ineffectual if He does not command the blessing.

Such attempts will generally make it worse. Nothing is more ordinary than for a proud spirit, striving with the crook, to make it more crooked. "Whoso breaks a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Whoso removes stones shall be hurt with them," &c. This is evident in the case of the murmurers in the wilderness. It naturally comes to be so; because, at that rate, the will of the party bends farther away from it. Moreover, God is provoked to wreath the yoke faster about one's neck, that He will by no means let it sit easy on him.

3. There is no crook but what may be remedied by Him, and made perfectly straight. "The Lord raises them that are bowed down. " &c. He can perform that concerning which there remains no hope with us. "Who quickens the dead, and calls those things which are not as though they were. " It is His prerogative to do wonders; to begin a work where the whole creation gives it over as hopeless, and carry it on to perfection.

4. He loves to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ Him that way. "Call on like in the day of trouble and I will deliver you. " &c. He makes them for that very end, that He may bring us to Him on that errand, and may manifest His power and goodness in evening of them. The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying His glorious perfections, which otherwise would be wanting.

5. A crook thus evened is a double mercy. There are some crooks evened by a touch of the hand of common providence, while people are either not exercised about them, or when they fret for their removal; these are sapless mercies and short-lived. Fruits thus too hastily plucked off the tree of providence can hardly miss to set the teeth on edge, and will certainly be bitter to the gracious soul. But oh the sweets of the evening of the crook by a humble application to and waiting on the Lord! It has the image and superscription of Divine favor on it, which makes it bulky and valuable. "For therefore I have seen your face, as though I had seen the face of God. " &c.

6. God has signalised His favor to His dearest children, in making and mending notable crooks in their lot. His darling ones ordinarily have the greatest crooks made in their lot. But then they make way for their richest experiences in the removal of them on the application to Him. This is clear from the case of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Which of the patriarchs had so great crooks as they? But which of them, on the other hand, had such signal tokens of the Divine favor? The greatest of men, as Samson and the Baptist, have been born of women naturally barren; so the greatest crooks issue in the richest mercies to them that are exercised by that means.

7. It is the shortest and surest way to go straight to God with the crook in the lot. If we would have our wish in that point, we must, as the eagle, first soar aloft, and then come down on the prey. Mark 5:36. Our faithless out-of-the-way attempts to even the crook, are but our fool's haste, that is no speed; as in the case of Abraham going in to Hagar. God is the first mover, who sets all the wheels in motion for evening the crook, which without Him will remain immovable.

Object. 1. "But it is needless, for I see that though the crook in my lot may mend, yet it never will mend. In its own nature it is capable of being removed, but it is plain it is not to be removed, it is hopeless."

Ans. That is the language of unbelieving haste, which faith and patience should correct. Abraham had as much to say for the hopelessness of his crook, and yet he applies to God in faith for the mending of it. Sarah had made such a conclusion, for which she was rebuked. Nothing can make

it needless in such a case to apply to God.

Object. 2. "But I have applied to Him again and again for it, yet it is never mended."

Ans. Delays are not denials of suits at the court of heaven, but trials of the faith and patience of the petitioners. And whose will persevere will certainly speed at length. "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. " Sometimes indeed folk grow pettish in the case of the crook in the lot, and let it drop out in their prayers, in a course of despondency, while yet it continues uneasy to them; but, if God mind to even it in mercy, He will oblige them to take it in again. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. " &c. If the removal comes while it is dropped, there will be little comfort in it. Though it were never to be removed while we live, that should not cut off our applying to God for the removal; for there are many to be answered till we come to the other world, and there all will be answered at once.

06.02. Part 2

Thomas Boston The Crook in the Lot

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He has made crooked? "—Ecclesiastes 7:13.

Directions for rightly managing the application for removing the crook in the lot.

1. Pray for it, and pray in faith, believing that, for the sake of Jesus, you shall certainly obtain at length, and in this life too, if it is good for you; but without peradventure in the life to come. They will not be disappointed that get the song of Moses and of the Lamb. And, in some cases of that nature, extraordinary prayer, with fasting, is very expedient.

2. Humble yourselves under it, as the yoke which the sovereign hand has laid on you. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." &c. Justify God, condemn yourselves, kiss the rod, and go quietly under it; this is the most feasible way to get rid of it, the end being obtained. "You will prepare your hearts, you will cause your ear to hear. "

3. Wait on patiently till the hand that made it mend it. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would wish; "But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. " Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord; His time will at length, to conviction, appear the best, and it will not go beyond it. "I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time. " Waiting on Him you will not be disappointed; "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me. "

Exhortation 2. What crook there is, which in the settled order of things cannot be removed or evened in this world, let us apply to God for suitable relief under it. For instance, the common crook in the lot of saints, namely, indwelling sin; as God has made that crook not to be removed here He can certainly balance it, and afford relief under it. The same is to be said of any crook, while it remains unremoved. In such cases apply yourself to God, for making up your losses another way. And there are five things I would have you to keep in view and aim at here.

1. To take God in Christ for and instead of mat thing, the withholding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot. There is never a crook which God makes in our lot, but it is in effect Heaven’s offer of a blessed exchange to us; such as, "Sell whatever you have, - and you shall have treasure in heaven." In managing of which exchange, God first puts out His hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us; and it is expected we put out our hand next, and take some heavenly thing from Him in the stead of it, and particularly His Christ. Wherefore has God emptied your left hand of such and such an earthly comfort? Stretch out your right hand to God in Christ, take Him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul’s closing with Christ is caned buying, wherein parting with one thing, we get another in its stead. "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. " Do this, and you will be more than even hands with

the crook in your lot.

2. Look for the stream running as full from Him as ever it did or could run, when the crook of the lot has dried it. This is the work of faith, confidently to depend on God for that which is denied us from the creature. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. " This is a most rational expectation: for it is certain there is no good in the creature but what is from God; therefore there is no good to be found in the creature, the stream, but what may be got immediately from God, the fountain. And it is a welcome plea, to come to God and say, Now, Lord, You have taken away from me such a creature-comfort, I must have as good from Yourself.

3. Seek for the spiritual fruits of the crook in the lot. We see the way in the world is, when one trade fails, to fall on and drive another trade; so should we, when there is a crook in the lot, making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments. If our trade with the world sinks, let us see to drive a trade with heaven more vigorously; see, if by means of the crook, we can obtain more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self-denial, &c. So while we lose at one hand we shall gain another.

4. Grace to bear us up under the crook. " For this thing I besought to the Lord thrice;" and He said, "My grace is sufficient for you. " Whether a man is faint, and have a light burden, or is refreshed and strengthened, and have a heavy one, it is all the same; the latter can go as easy under his burden as the former under his. Grace proportioned to the trial is what we should aim at; getting that, though the crook is not evened, we are even hands with it.

5. The keeping in our eye the eternal rest and weight of glory in the other world. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." This will balance the crook in your lot, be what it will; while they who have no well-grounded hope of salvation will find the crook in their lot in this world such a weight, as they have nothing to counterbalance it. But the hope of eternal rest may bear up under all the toil and trouble met with here.

Exhortation 3. Let us then set ourselves rightly to bear the crook in our lot, while God sees fit to continue it. What we cannot mend, let us bear Christianly, and not fight against God, and so kick against the pricks. So let us bear it.

1. Patiently, without fuming and fretting, or murmuring. Though we lose our comforts in the creature through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves. The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty fire to warm at: but impatience under it scatters it, so as to set the house on fire about us, and expose us to danger. "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls. "

2. With Christian fortitude, without sinking under discouragement, - "nor faint when you are rebuked of Him." Satan’s work is by the crook, either to bend or break people’s spirits, and oftentimes by bending to break them. Our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course, guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness lies not in any earthly comfort, nor will the want of any of them render us miserable. So that we are resolutely to hold on our way with a holy contempt and regardlessness of hardships. "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

Quest. "When may any one be reckoned to fall under sinking discouragement from the crook in his lot?"

Ans. When it prevails so far as to unfit us for the duties either of our particular or Christian calling. We may be sure it has carried us beyond the bounds of moderate grief, when it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls us to manage. Or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether, "That your prayers are not hindered, " (Greek, cut off, or cut up, like a tree from the roots), or making one quite hopeless in them.

3 Let us bear it profitably, so we may gain some advantage by that means. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn your statutes. " There is an advantage to be made by it. And it is certainly an ill-managed crook in our lot, when we get not some spiritual good of it. The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine, and as it is lost physic that purges away no ill humours, in vain are its unpleasantness to the taste and its gripings endured; so it is a lost crook, and ill is the bitterness of it borne, if we are not bettered by it. "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin. "

Motives to press this exhortation.

Motive 1. There will be no evening of it while God sees fit to continue it. Let us behave under it as we will, and make what sallies we please in the case, it will continue immovable, as fixed with bands of iron and brass. "But He is of one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, even that He does. For He performs the thing that is appointed for Me; and many such things are with Him. " Is it not wisdom then to make the best we may of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue then of necessity. What is not to be cured must be endured, and should be with a Christian resignation.

Motive 2. An awkward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes the yoke gall our necks, but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us. How often are we, in that case, like men dashing their heads against a rock to remove it! The rock stands unmoved, but they are wounded, and lose exceedingly by their struggle. Impatience under the crook lays an overweight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear it.

Motive 3. The crook in your lot is the special trial God has chosen for you to take your measure by. It is God’s fire, by which He tries what metal men are made of: Heaven’s touchstone for discovering true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear and go through several trials, whom the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because by no means they can bear that. Think then with yourself under it,—Now, here the trial of my state turns; I must, by this, be proved either sincere or a hypocrite; for, can any be a cordial subject of Christ, without being able to submit his lot to Him? Do not all who sincerely come to Christ, put a blank in His hand? And does He not tell us, that without that disposition we are not His disciples? "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. " Perhaps you will find you can submit to anything but that: but will not that but mar all? Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ with a reserve or exception of one thing, in which they behoved to be their own lords?

Quest. "Is that disposition then a qualification necessarily pre-required to our believing, and if so, where must we have it? Can we work it out of our natural powers? "

Ans. No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the same saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, by which the soul is brought to believe on Him. By this means the soul sees Him an able Savior, and so trusts on Him for salvation; the rightful Lord and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to Him. The soul taking Him for a Savior, takes Him also for a head and ruler. It is Christ's giving Himself to us, and our receiving Him, that causes us to quit other things to and for Him, as it is the light that dispels the darkness.

Case. "Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to Him in that point."

Ans. 1. That submission will not be carried on in any without a struggle; the old man will never submit to it, and when the new man of grace is submitting to it, the old man will still be rebelling. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. " But are you sincerely desirous and habitually aiming to submit to it? From the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourself that you cannot submit to it. This is submitting of your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel. If you had your choice, would you rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your heart's desire? And do you not sincerely endeavor to submit, notwithstanding the reluctance of the flesh?

Ans. 2. Where is the Christian self-denial and taking up the cross, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of His disciples. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. " Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross. But while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be denied any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees fit especially to be denied, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favor of self.

Ans. 3. Where is our conformity to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook? We cannot evidence ourselves Christians, without conformity to Christ. "He that says he abides in Him, ought himself, also so to walk, even as He walked." There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but He submitted to it. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. " "For even Christ pleased not Himself. " &c. And so must we, if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed.

Ans. 4. How shall we prove ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, Our Father,—Your will be done on earth as, &c. Nay, the language of that practice is, We must have our own will, and God's will cannot satisfy us.

Motive 4. The trial by the crook here will not last long. What though the work is sore, it may be me better comported with that it will not be lonesome; a few days or years at farthest will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not say, I shall be eased of it; for, if not eased before, you will be eased of it at death, come after it what will. A serious view of death and eternity might make us set ourselves to behave rightly under our crook while it lasts.

Motive 5. If you would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, you would find it easier than you imagine. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and you shall find rest to your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. " Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should ply with the crook; that it is a burden to them altogether insupportable; as long as you believe that, be sure you will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be borne of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, and being by faith fetched, it will certainly come.

Motive 6. If you behave Christianly under your crook here, you will not lose your labor, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ. There is a blessing pronounced on him that endures on this very ground, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. " Heaven is the place into which the approved, upon the trial of the crook, are received. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. " When you come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will you have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and increase your joy.

Motive 7. If you do not behave Christianly under it, you will lose your souls in the other world. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them forever. If they will not submit to His yoke here, and go quietly under it, He will wreath His yoke about their neck forever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed. Therefore, set yourselves to behave rightly under the crook in your lot.

If you ask what way one may reach that; for direction we propose, -

Prop III. The considering the crook in the lot as the work of God is a proper means to bring one to behave rightly under it.

1. What it is to consider the crook as the work of God. We take it up in these five things

First, An inquiry into the spring from where it rises. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and inquire into the spring of it. Surely it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it for ourselves; and to ascribe it to fortune is to ascribe it to nothing. It is not sprung of itself, but sown by one hand or another for us. And we are to notice the hand from which it comes.

Secondly, A perceiving of the hand of God in it. Whatever hand any creatures have in there, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme manager’s agency. Without this we shall make a God of the creature that is instrumental of the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, and bring ourselves under the doom, "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up."

Thirdly, A representing it to ourselves as a work of God, which He has wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the Divine perfections. This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from where a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to overlook the creature; ascribing it to God, as if

no other hand were in it, His being always the principal in it: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems Him good. " Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one fixing his eyes, not on the axe, but on him that welded it. Here two things are to come into our consideration.

1st. The degree of God, purposing that crook for us from eternity; "for He works all things after the counsel of His own will, " the sealed book, in which are written all the black lines that made the crook. Whatever valleys of darkness, grief, and sorrow we are carried through, we are to look on Hem as made by the mountains of brass, the immovable Divine purposes. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no further than the event goes in our sight and feeling. For so far the book is opened for us to look into.

2ndly. The providence of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time. There is nothing can befall us without Him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, He is the spring that sets all the created wheels in motion, which ceasing, they would all stop: though He is still infinitely pure in His agency, however impure they are in theirs. Job considered both these.

Fourthly, A continuing in me thought of it as such. It is not a simple glance of the eye, but a contemplating and leisurely viewing of it as His work, that is the proper mean. We are to be,

1st. Habitually impressed with this consideration: as the crook is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the remedy should be habitually kept up. There are other considerations besides this that we must entertain, so that we cannot always have it expressly in our mind: but we must lay it down for a rooted principle, according to which we are to manage the crook, and keep the heart in a disposition, by which it may expressly slip into our minds, as occasion calls.

2ndly. We are to be occasionally exercised in it. Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy; when the yoke begins to gad the neck, there should be an application of this spiritual ointment. And however often the former comes in on us, it will be our wisdom to fetch in the latter as me proper remedy; the oftener it is used, it will more easily come to hand, and also be the more effectual.

Fifthly, A considering it for me end for which it is proposed to us, namely, to bring us to a dutiful carriage under it. Men’s corruptions will cause them to enter on the consideration of it; but as the principle is, so the end and effect of it will be, corrupt. But we must enter on and use it for a good end, if we would have good of it, taking it as a practical consideration for regulating our conduct under the crook.

II. How it is to be understood to be a proper means to bring one to behave rightly under the crook. Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But as it is used in faith, in the faith of the Gospel; that is to say, a sinner’s bare considering the crook in his lot as the work of God, without any saving relation to Him, will never be a way to behave himself rightly under it. But having believed in Jesus Christ, and so taking God for his God, the considering of the crook of the work of God, his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behavior. Many hearers mistake here. When they hear such and such lawful considerations proposed for bringing them to duty, they presently imagine that by the mere force of them, they may gain the point. And many preachers too, who, forgetting Christ and the Gospel, pretend by the

force of reason to make men Christians; the eyes of both being held, that they do not see the corruption of men's nature, which is such as sets the true cure above the force of reason; all that they are sensible of being some ill habits, which they think may be shaken off by a vigorous application of their rational faculties. To clear this matter, consider,—

First, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent Adam? That is, to set beggars on a level with the rich, lame men to a journey with those that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, by which he might, by the force of moral considerations, have brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? Whatever force is in them to a soul endowed with spiritual life, what power have they to raise the dead, such as we are?

Secondly, The Scripture is very plain on this head, showing the indispensable necessity of faith; and that, such as unites to Christ, "Without Me," that is, separate from Me, "you can do nothing;" no, not with all the moral considerations you can use. How were the ten commandments given on Mount Sinai? Not as bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the Gospel, to be believed in the first place; ''I am the Lord your God, " &c. And so Solomon, whom many regard rather as a moral philosopher than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the Proverbs, with most express gospel. And must we have it expressly repeated in our Bibles with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes and take these precepts without it? That is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved Him more, we should see Him more in every page and in every command, receiving the law at His mouth.

Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to behave rightly under the crook in the lot; what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the win of God must be in it. What love to God it must proceed from; how regard to His glory must influence it as the chief end of it; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith before mentioned. I know a Christian may reach it without full assurance. But still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. Oh! what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, what think they can for a moment empty them of the creature further than they can fill them with a God as their God in its room and stead? No doubt men may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behavior under the crook externally right, such as many pagans had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached without that faith in God.

Object. "Then it is saints only that are capable of the improvement of that consideration."

Ans. Yea, indeed it is so, as to that and all other moral considerations, for true Christian ends: and that amounts to no more than that directions for walking rightly are only for the living that have the use of their limbs; and, therefore, that you may improve it, set yourselves to believe in the first place.

III. I shall confirm that it is a proper mean to bring one to behave rightly under it. This will appear, if we consider these four things.

1. It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on those things about the crook which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the balking of our will and wishes, the satisfaction we should have in the matter's going according to our mind, the instruments of the crook, how

injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, &c. The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of the fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God would be a cure by way of diversion; and such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. It has a moral aptitude for producing this good effect. Though our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason, yet it is carried on not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, it is fit to awe us into a submission, and ministers a deal of argument for behaving Christianly under our crook.

3. It has a Divine appointment for that end, which is to be believed. So the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity. That which makes anything a means, fit for the end is a word of Divine appointment. To use anything then for an end, without the faith of this, is to make a god of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependence on God, according to that word of appointment. And everything is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it.

4. The Spirit may be expected to work by it, and does work by it, in them that believe, and look to him for it, forasmuch as it is a mean of his own appointment. Papists, legalists, and all superstitious persons devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or really having a moral fitness for the same; but they are quite ineffectual, because, like Abana, and Pharpar, they want a word of Divine appointment for curing us of our leprosy; therefore the Spirit works not by them, since they are not His instruments, but devised of their own hearts. And since even the means of Divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a Divine appointment, the Spirit works by it.

Use. Then take this direction for your behaving rightly under the crook in your lot. Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices:

1. Consider it as the work of your God in Christ. This is the way to sprinkle it with Gospel-grace, and so to make it tolerable. The discerning of a Father’s hand in the crook will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you. For this cause it will be necessary, (1.) Solemnly to take God for your God, under your crook. (2.) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe and claim your interest in Him.

2. Enlarge the consideration with a view of the Divine relations to you, and the Divine attributes. Consider it, being the work of your God, the work of your Father, elder Brother, Head, Husband, &c., who, therefore, surely consults your good. Consider His holiness and justice, showing He does not wrong you; His mercy and goodness, that it is not worse; His sovereignty, that may silence you; His infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it.

3. Consider what a work of His it is, how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance: a correcting work, to chastise you for your follies, a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin you would otherwise be apt to run into; a trying work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruption; a weaning work, to wean you from the world and fit you for heaven.

4. In all your considerations of it in this manner look upward for His Spirit to render them effectual. —Thus may you behave Christianly under it, till God make it even either here or in heaven.

"Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud "—Proverbs 16:19. Could men once be brought to believe that it is better to have their minds bend to the crook in their lot, than to force the crook to their mind, they would be in a fair way to bring their matters to a good account. Hear then the Divine decision in that case: "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. " In which words First, There is a comparison instituted and that between two parties, and two points in which they vastly differ.

1st. The parties are the lowly and the proud, who differ like heaven and earth. The proud are climbing up and soaring aloft; the lowly are content to creep on the ground, if that is the will of God. Let us view them more particularly as the text represents them. On the one hand is the lowly. Here there is a line-reading and a marginal, both from the Holy Spirit, and they differ only in a letter. The former is the afflicted or poor, that are low in their condition; those that have a notable crook in their lot through affliction laid on them, by which their condition is lowered in the world. The other is the lowly or meek humble ones, who are low in their spirit, as well as their condition, and so have their minds brought down to their lot. Both together making the character of this lowly party. On the other hand is the proud, the gay and high-minded ones. It is supposed here that they are crossed too, and have crooks in their lot; for, dividing the spoil is the consequence of a victory, and a victory presupposes a battle.

2nd. The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, namely, being of a humble spirit, and dividing the spoil.

Afflicted and lowly ones may sometimes get their condition changed, may be raised up on high, and divide the spoil, as Hannah, Job, &c. The proud may sometimes be thrown down and crushed, as Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar, &c. But that is not the question, Whether it is better to be raised up with the lowly, or thrown down with the proud? There would be no difficulty in determining that. But the question is, whether it is better to be of a low and humble spirit, in low circumstances, with afflicted ones; or to divide the spoil, and get one’s will, with the proud? If men would speak the native sentiments of their hearts, that question would be determined in a contradiction to the text. The points then here compared and set one against another are these: On the one hand, to be of a humble spirit with afflicted lowly ones. To be low of spirit; for the word primarily denotes lowness in situation or state. So the point here proposed is to be with, or in the state of, afflicted lowly ones, having the spirit brought down to that low lot; the lowness of the spirit balancing the lowness of one’s condition. On the other hand, to divide the spoil with the proud. The point here proposed is, to be with or in the state of the proud, having their lot by main force brought to their mind; as those who, taking themselves to be injured, fight it out with the enemy, overcome and divide the spoil according to their will.

Secondly, The decision made, in which the former is preferred to the latter; "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." If these two parties were set before us, it were better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those who, being of a proud and high spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humble spirit is better than a heightened condition.

Doctrine. There is a generation of lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit lowered and brought down to their lot; whose case, in that respect, is better than that of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind.

1. We shall consider the generation of the lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit brought down to their lot. And we shall, First, Lay down some general considerations about them.

1. There is such a generation in the world, bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the Scripture elsewhere speaks of them. Where shall we seek them? Not in heaven, there are no afflicted ones there; nor in hell, there are no lowly or humble ones there, whose spirit is brought to their lot. In His world they must then be, where the state of trial is.

2. If it were not so, Christ, as He was in the world, would have no followers in it. He was the head of that generation whom they all copy after: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." And for His honor, and the honor of His cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands. "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. " His image lies in these two, suffering and holiness, of which lowliness is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes, that there is another generation ("their eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up'') quite opposite to them, and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high spirit keeps up in spite of lowering circumstances.

4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of Divine grace can bring down men's minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God. Men may put on a face of submission to a law and a crossed lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it is in vain to strive; but to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.

5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The way to heaven lies through tribulation to all; and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding; yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit is in this way humbled and brought down to their lot. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." "For I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content with it. 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 abjured and to suffer need. "

6. A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favorable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we should find none in this world. But those who are sincerely aiming and endeavoring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes blown aside and returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation.

Secondly, We shall enter into particulars. There are three things which together make up their character.

1st. Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous, is a generation of afflicted ones, whom God keeps under the discipline of the covenant. We may take it up in these two:

1. There is a yoke of affliction of one kind or other oftentimes upon them. God is frequently visiting them as a master does his scholars, and a physician his patients; whereas others are in a sort overlooked by Him. They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, God sees it good for them.

2. There is a particular yoke of affliction which God has chosen for them, that hangs on them, and is seldom, if ever, taken off them. That is their special trial, the crook in their lot, the yoke which lies on them for their constant exercise. Their other trials may be exchanged, but that is a weight that still hangs about them, bowing them down.

2ndly. Lowliness in their disposition and tenor of spirit. They are a generation of lowly humble ones, whose spirits God has, by His grace, brought down from their natural height. And thus.

1. They think soberly and meanly of themselves; what they are; what they can do; what they are worth, and what they deserve. Viewing themselves in the glass of the Divine law and perfection, they see themselves as a mass of imperfection and sinfulness.

2. They think highly and honorably of God. They are taught by the Spirit what God is; and so entertain elevated thought of Him. They consider Him as the Sovereign of the world; His perfections as infinite; His work as perfect. They look on Him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ, doing all things well; trusting His wisdom, goodness, and love, even where they cannot see.

3. They think favorably of others, as far as in justice they may. Though they cannot hinder themselves from seeing their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And, because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving of it, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

4. They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and His will. Pride sets a man up against God; lowliness brings him back to his place, and lays him down at the feet of his sovereign Lord, saying, Your will be done on earth, &c. They seek no more the command, but are content that God Himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage all for them.

5. They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things. Lowliness levels the towering imaginations which pride mounts up against heaven; draws a veil over all personal worth and excellencies before the Lord, and yields a man's all to the Lord, to be as stepping-stones to the throne of His glory.

6. They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them. Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possessed of, and fixes the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making one like the flies, which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a mark on the good things they have possessed, or yet do.

3rdly. A spirit brought down to their lot. Their lot is a low and afflicted one; but their spirit is as low, being, through grace, brought down to it. We may take it up in these five things:

1. They submit to it as just. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him. " There are no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just that we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, it is of themselves; their hearts do not rise up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouth against the heavens. They justify God, and condemn themselves, reverencing His holiness and spotless righteousness in His proceedings against them.

2. They go quietly under it as tolerable. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it on him; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. " While the unsubdued spirit rages under the yoke as a bull unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it. They see it is of the Lord’s mercies that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without those overweights on it that turbulent passions add to them; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been, like a burden fitted on the back.

3. They are satisfied in it, as drawing their comfort from another quarter than their outward condition, even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean on. "Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit is in the vine, - yet I will rejoice in the Lord. " Thus did David in the day of his distress. "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God. " It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point on which their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes men’s comfort to wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

4. They have a complacency in it, as that which is fit and good for them. Men have a sort of complacency in the working of physic, though it gripes them sore; they rationally think with themselves that it is good and best for them. So these lowly souls consider their afflicted lot as a spiritual medicine, necessary, fit, and good for them; yea, best for them for the time, since it is ministered by their heavenly Father. So they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot. The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness of his lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflicting lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how He cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the soul’s love may run towards Himself; how He pulls off and holds off the man’s burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditiously in the way to heaven.

5. They rest in it, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it see it fit to bring them out with His good will. Though an unsubdued spirit’s time for deliverance is always ready, a humble soul will be afraid of being taken out of its afflicted lot too soon. It will not be for moving for a change, till the heaven’s moving brings it about. So this does not hinder prayer and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord, but requires faith, hope, patience, and resignation.

II. We shall consider the generation of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. And in their character also are three things.

First, there are crosses in their lot. They also have their trials allotted them by overruling providence, and let them be in what circumstances they will in the world, they cannot miss them altogether. For, consider,—

1. The confusion and vanity brought into the creation by man's sin, have made it impossible to get through the world but men must meet with what will ruffle them. Sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thicket, there is no getting through without being scratched. As midges in the summer will fly about those walking abroad in a goodly attire, as well as about those in sordid apparel; so will crosses in the world meet with the high as well as the low.

2. The pride of their heart exposes them particularly to crosses. A proud heart will make a cross to itself, where a lowly soul would find none. It will make a real cross ten times the weight it would be to the humble. The generation of the proud are like nettles and thorn hedges, upon which things flying about do fix, while they pass over low and plain things; so none are more exposed to crosses than they, though none so unfit to bear them; as appears from,

Secondly, reigning pride in their spirit. Their spirits were never subdued by a work of thorough humiliation; they remain at the height in which the corruption of nature placed them. Thus they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humors of pride and passion; thus, when the yoke once begins to touch it, they cannot have any more ease. We may view the case of the proud generation here in three things.

1. They have an over-value for themselves; and so will not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a swelling vanity is in that, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Thus a work of humiliation is necessary to make one take on the yoke, whether of Christ's precepts or providence. The first error is in the understanding; from where Solomon ordinarily calls a wicked man a fool; accordingly the first stroke in conversion is there too, by conviction to humble. Men are bigger in their own conceit than they are indeed; therefore God, suiting things to what we are really, cannot please us.

2. They have an unmortified, self-will, arising from that over-value for themselves, and they will not stoop. The question between heaven and us is, whether God's will or our own must prevail? Our will is corrupt, God's will is holy; they cannot agree in one. God says in His providence, our will must yield to His; but that it will not do till the iron sinew in it is broken.

3. They have a crowd of unsubdued passions taking part with self-will. They say, He shall not stoop, and so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without man. A holy God crosses the self-will of proud creatures by His providence, overruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by His own immediate hand, as in the case of Cain, sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of Ahab, to whom Naboth refused his vineyard. The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controlled, rises up against it, and fights for the mastery, with its whole force of unmortified passions. The design is to remove the cross, even the crook, and bring the thing to their own mind. This is the cause of this unholy war, in which,

(1.) There is one black band of hellish passions that marches upward, and makes an attack; on heaven itself, namely, discontent, impatience, murmuring, frettings, and the like. "The foolishness of man perverts his way; and his heart frets against the Lord." These fire the beast, fall the

countenance, let off sometimes a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, and sometimes of blasphemies.

(2.) There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument or instruments of the cross, namely, anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. These carry the man out of the possession of himself, fill the heart with a boiling heat, the mouth with clamor, and evil-speaking, and threatenings are breathed out, and sometimes set the hands on work—a most heavy event—as in the case of Ahab against Naboth.

Thus the proud carry on the war, but oftentimes they lose the day, and the cross remains immovable for all they can do; yea, and sometimes they themselves fall in the quarrel, it ends in their ruin. But that is not the case in the text. For we are to consider them as, Thirdly, getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. This speaks,

1. Holy providence yielding to the man's unmortified self-will, and letting it go according to his mind. God sees it suitable to let the struggle with him fall, for it does not prevail to his good. So the reins are laid on the proud man's neck, and he has what he would be at; "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. "

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigor. "They were not estranged from their lust." God, in the method of His covenant, sometimes gives His people their will, and sets them where they would be; but then, in that case, the lust for the thing is mortified, and they are as weaned children. But here the lust remains rampant. The proud seek meat for it and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off. They could not think of bringing their mind to their lot; but they thwarted with it, wrestled and fought against it, till it is brought up to their mind; so the day is their own, the victory is on their side.

4. The man is pleased in his having carried his point, even as one is when he is dividing the spoil.

Thus the case of the afflicted lowly generation, and the proud generation prospering, is stated. Now,

III. I am to confirm the doctrine, or the decision of the text, that the case of the former is better than that of the latter. It is better to be in a low afflicted condition, with the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters going according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations.

1. Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatever its preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in the world attend the humble spirit, and all the prosperity in the world attend pride, humility will still have the better. As god in a dunghill is more excellent than so much lead in a cabinet, For,

(1.) Humility is a part of the image of God. Pride is the master-piece of the image of the devil. Let us view Him who was the express image of the Father's person, and we shall behold Him meek and lowly in heart. None more afflicted, yet His spirit perfectly brought down to His lot. 'He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. " That is a shining part of the Divine image; for though God cannot be low in respect of His state and condition, yet He is of infinite condescension. None bears as He, nor suffers patiently so much contradiction to His will;

which is proposed to us for our encouragement in affliction, as it shone in Christ. ’For consider Him that endures such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied, and faint in your minds. "

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil. Shall we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point. Though he is the most miserable, yet he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is the greatest distance between his spirit and his lot; the former is as high as the throne of God, the latter as low as hell. As it is impossible that ever his lot should be brought up to his spirit; so his spirit will never come down to his lot. Therefore he will be eternally in a state of war with his lot. Thus, even at this time, he has no rest, but goes about, seeks rest indeed, but finds none.

Now, is it not better to be like God than like the devil; like Him who is the fountain of all good, than him who is the spring and sink of all evil? Can anything possibly cast the balance here, and turn the preference to the other side? "Then better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, " &c.

(2.) Humility and lowliness of spirit qualify us for friendly communion and intercourse with God in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss. If we have that nothing can make us miserable. "If God is for us who can be against us?" Now, who are they whom God is for but the humble and lowly? They who being in Christ are so made like Him. He blessed them, and declares them the heirs of the crown of glory: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. " He will look to them, be their condition ever so low, while He overlooks others. He will have respect to them however they are despised: "Though the Ford is high, yet He has respect to the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off. " He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they lie now. Whom is He against? Whom does He resist? The proud. Them He curses, and that curse will dry up their arm at length. The proud man is God’s rival; he makes himself his own god, and would have those about him make him theirs too; he rages, he blusters, if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down.

Now, is it not better to be qualified for communion with God than to have Him engaged against us, at any rate?

(3.) Humility is a duty pleasing to God, pride a sin pleasing to the devil. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction, "and be clothed with humility. " That is our becoming garment. The humble publican was accepted, the proud Pharisee rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud as "Wrath is come on them to the uttermost. " They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now duty is better than sin at any rate.

2. They whose spirits are brought down to their afflicted lot have much quiet and repose of mind, while the proud, that must have their lot brought up to their mind, have much disquiet, trouble, and vexation. Consider here on the one hand that quiet of mind, and ease within is a great blessing upon which the comfort of life depends. Nothing without this can make one’s life happy. And where this is maintained nothing can make it miserable. This being secured in God that is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves. The spirit brought down to the lot makes and maintains this inward tranquillity. Our whole trouble in our lot in

the world rises from the disagreement of our mind with it; let the mind be brought to the lot, and the whole tumult is instantly hushed; let it be kept in that disposition, and the man shall stand at ease in his affliction, like a rock unmoved with waters beating on it: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called." On the other hand, consider what disquiet of mind the proud suffer before they can get their lot brought up to their mind. "They have taught their tongues to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity." "You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not. " What arrows of grief go through their heart! What torture of anxiety, fretting, and vexation must they endure! What contrary passions fight within them! And what sallies of passion do they make! What uneasiness was Haman in because he could carry the point of revenge against Mordecai by obtaining the king's decree! When the thing is got to their mind it will not quit the cost. The enjoyment of it does not bring so much satisfaction and pleasure as the want of it gave pain. This was evident in Rachel's case, as to the having of children. There is a dead fly in the ointment that mars the savour they expected to find in it. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence before it is ripe will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night.

They have but an unsure hold of it; it does not last with them. Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again, "I gave you a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath, " having a root of pride, it quickly withers away; or else they are taken from it, that they have no access to enjoy it. So Haman obtained the decree; but before the day of the execution came he was gone.

3. They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot gain a point far more valuable than they who in their pride force up their lot to their mind. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city. " This will appear if you consider,

(1.) The latter makes but a better condition in outward things, the former makes a better man. The life is more than meat. The man himself is more valuable than all external conveniences that attend him. What therefore betters the man is preferable to what betters only his condition. Who doubts but where two are sick, and the one gets himself transported from a coarse bed to a fine one, the sickness still remaining; the other lies still in the coarse bed, but the sickness is removed; that the case of the latter is preferable? So here, &c.

(2.) The subduing of our own passions is more excellent than to have the whole world subdued to our will: for then we are masters of ourselves, according to that. Whereas, in the other case, we are still slaves to the worst of masters. In the one case we are safe, blow what storm will; in the other we lie exposed to thousands of dangers. "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. "

(3.) When both shall come to be judged it will appear the one has multiplied the tale of their good works in bringing their spirit to their lot; the others the tale of their ill works in bringing their lot to their spirit. We have to do with an omniscient God, in whose eyes every internal action is a work, good or bad, to be reckoned for. An afflicted lot is painful, but where it is well managed it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the spirit of a Christian, which otherwise would lie dormant. But there is never an act of resignation to the will of God under the cross, nor an act of trusting in Him for His help, but they will be recorded in heaven's register as good works. And these are occasioned by affliction. On the other hand there is never a rising of the proud heart against the

lot, nor a faithless attempt to bring it to our mind, whether it succeed or not, but it passes for an ill work before God. How then will the tale of such be multiplied by the way in which the spoil is divided!

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folks to get their will. Many there are who cannot be pleased with God's will about them, and they get their own will with a vengeance. "Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." It may be most pleasant and grateful for the time but it is not the safest. Let not the people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by a strong hand; let them not triumph in such victory: the after-reckoning will open their eyes.

2. The afflicted crossed party whose lot is kept low is so far from being a loser that he is a gainer by it if his spirit is brought down to it. And if he will see things in the light of God's unerring Word, he is in better case than if he had got all carried to his mind. In the one way the vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction. In the other the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines His own.

3. It is better to yield to Providence than to fight it out, though we should win. Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way we act most honorably; for what honor can there be in the creature's disputing his ground with his Creator? And we act most wisely; for whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure victory will be on heaven's side in the war, "For by strength shall no man prevail. ''

4. It is of so much greater concern for us to get our spirits brought down than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most men never mind the bringing down of their spirits, and few there are who apply themselves to it. And what is that but to be concerned to minister drink to the thirsty sick, but never to mind to seek a cure for them, by which their thirst may be carried off.

Use 2. Of exhortation. As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your desire be rather to have your spirit humbled and brought down than to get the cross removed. I mean not but that you may use all lawful means for the removal of your cross, in dependence on God; but only that you be more concerned to get your spirit to bow and ply, than to get the crook in your lot evened.

Motive 1. It is far more needful for us to have our spirits humbled under the cross than to have the cross removed. The removal of the cross is needful only for the ease of the flesh, the humbling for the profit of our souls, to purify them, and bring them into a state of health and cure.

2. The humbling of the spirit will have a mighty good effect on a crossed lot, but the removal of the cross will have none on the unhumbled spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, and in due time carry it cleanly off. But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbled; though it may prevent irritation, yet the disease still remains.

3. Think with yourselves how dangerous and hopeless a case it is to have the cross removed before the spirit is humbled; that is, to have the means of cure pulled away and blocked up from us while the power of the disease is yet unbroken; to be taken off trials before we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our Physician as hopeless.

Use 3. For direction. Believing the Gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God’s greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness; so will you be humbled under the mighty hand of God; and in due time He will lift you up.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time—1 Peter 5:6. In the preceding part of this chapter the apostle presents the duties of the church officers towards the people; and then the duty of the people, both towards their officers and among themselves, which he winds up in one word, submission. For which causes he recommends humility as the great means to bring all to their respective duties. This is enforced with an argument taken from the different treatment the Lord gives to the proud and the humble: his opposing Himself to the one, and showing favor to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration: and in it we have,

1st. The duty we are to study: ``Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. " And in this we may notice,

(1.) The state of those to whom it is proposed, those under the mighty hand of God whom His hand has humbled or brought low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these, I think, are meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those who, by the providence of God, are in any kind of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others, God has made this life a state of trial; and for that cause He has, by His mighty hand, subjected men one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters; and these again to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depend on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate. This state of the world God has made for the trial of men in their several stations and dependence on others; and therefore, when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. "Then comes the end, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Meantime, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe their superiors, to whom God’s mighty hand has subjected them.

(2.) The duty itself, namely, humiliation of our spirits under the humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. " Whether we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometime in, or whether we are only inferiors in one or more relations, or whether, which is most common, both these are in our case, we must in this eye the mighty hand of God, as that which places us there, and is over us, there to hold us down in it; and so, with an awful regard to it, bow down under it, in the temper and disposition of our spirits, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

(3.) A particular spring of this duty: therefore we must consider, that those who cannot quietly keep the place assigned them of God in their afflictions or relation, but still press upward against the mighty hand that is over them, that mighty hand resists them, throwing them down, and often farther down than before; whereas it treats them with grace and favor that compose themselves under it to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation; so, eyeing this, we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2ndly. The infallible issue of that course; that He may exalt you in due time. The particle that is not always to be understood finally, as denoting the end or design the agent proposes to himself, but sometimes eventually only, as denoting the event or issue of the action. So here, the meaning is not, Humble yourselves, on design He may exalt you; but, and it shall issue in His exalting you.

(1.) Here is a happy event of humiliation of spirit secured, and that is exaltation or lifting up on high, by the power of God, that He may exalt you. Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun rises after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objections that the world and our corrupt hearts are a

06.02a. Part 2 cont'd

(1.) Here is a happy event of humiliation of spirit secured, and that is exaltation or lifting up on high, by the power of God, that He may exalt you. Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun rises after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objections that the world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low lot.

Object. 1. If we let our spirit fall we shall lie always at folks' feet, and they trample on us.

Ans. No; pride of spirit unsubdued will bring men to lie at the feet of others for ever. But humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from under their feet. They that humble themselves now will be exalted for ever; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast yourselves even down with your low lot, and assure yourselves you shall not lie there.

Object. 2. If we do not raise ourselves none will raise us, and therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right.

Ans. That is wrong. Humble yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot, or low condition; and they that have God engaged for raising them have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Bringing down of the spirit is our duty, raising us up is God's work; let us not forfeit the privilege of God's raising us up by arrogating that work to ourselves, taking it out of His hand.

Object. 3. But sure we shall never rise high if we let our spirits fall.

Ans. This is wrong too: God will not only raise the humble ones, but He will lift them up on high; for so the word signifies. They shall be as high at length as ever they were low, were they ever so low; nay, the exaltation will bear proportion to the humiliation.

(2.) Here is the date of that happy event when it will fall out. In due time, or in the season, the proper season for it, "In due season we shall reap, if we do not faint." We are apt to weary in humbling, trying circumstances, and would instantly have up our head. But Solomon observes, There is a time for everything when it does best, and the wise will wait for it. There is a time too for exalting them that humble themselves; God has set it, and it is the due time for the purpose, the time when it does best, even as sowing in the spring, and reaping in the harvest. When that time comes, your exalting shall no longer be put off, and it will come too soon should it come before that time.

Doctrine I. The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances, should lie towards a suitable humbling of the spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them. We shall consider, I. What things are supposed in this. It supposes that

1. God brings men into humbling circumstances. "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree. " There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth,

that must be mortified before they can be suitable for heaven: and therefore no man can miss, in this time of trial, some things that will give a proof whether he can stoop or not. And God brings them into humbling circumstances for that very end. "The Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart. "

2. These circumstances prove pressing as a weight on the heart tending to bear it down. "Therefore he brought down their hearts with labor." They strike at the grain of the heart, and cross the natural inclination: whence a trial arises, whether, when God lays on His mighty hand, the man can yield under it or not; and consequently, whether he is suitable for heaven or not.

3. The heart is naturally apt to rise up against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on. The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more to please himself than to please his God. "They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none says, where is God my maker?" This is the first gate the heart turns to in humbling circumstances, and in this way the unsubdued spirit holds on.

4. But what God requires is, rather to labor to bring down the heart than to get up the head. Here lies the proof of one’s suitableness for heaven; and then is one in the way heavenward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart than to get up his head, to go calmly under his burden than to get it off, to bow under the mighty hand than to put it off him.

5. There must be a noticing of the hand of God in humbling circumstances. "Hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it. " There is an abjectness of spirit, by which some give up themselves to the will of others in the harshest treatment, merely to please them, without regard to the authority and command of God. This is real meanness of spirit, by which one lies quietly to be trampled on by a fellow-worm, from its imaginary weight; and none so readily fall into it as the proud at some times to serve their own turn. These are men-pleasers.

II. What are those humbling circumstances the mighty hand of God brings men into. Supposing here what was before taught concerning the crook in the lot being of God’s making, these are circumstances,—

1. Of imperfection. God has placed all men in such circumstances under a variety of wants and imperfections. We can look nowhere where we are not beset with them. There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us. Our bodies and our souls, in all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. The pride of all glory is stained; and it is a shame for us not to be humbled under such wants as attend us. It is like a beggar strutting in his rags.

2. Of inferiority in relations, by which men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others. God has, for a trial of men’s submission to Himself, subjected them to others whom He has set over them, to discover what regard they will pay to His authority and commands at second-hand. Dominion or superiority is a part of the Divine image shining in them. And therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to that ray of the Divine image shining in them, is necessarily required. The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, namely, that they are so far in the place of God to their relatives, and though the parties are worthless in themselves, that losses not from the debt due to them. The reason is, because it is not their qualities, but their character, which is the ground of that debt of reverence and subjection;

and the trial of God takes of us in that matter and turns not on the point of the former, but of the latter.

Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness, in all things not contrary to the command of God, is a rising up against His mighty hand, because it is mediately on us for that effect, though it is a man's hand that is immediately on us.

3. Of contradiction, tending directly to balk us of our will. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too. There is a perfect harmony in heaven, no one to contradict another there; for they are in their state of retribution and exaltation. But we are here in our state of trial and humiliation, and therefore cannot miss contradiction, be we placed ever so high.

Whether these contradictions are just or unjust, God tries men with them to humble them, to break them off from addictedness to their own will, and to teach them resignation and self-denial. They are in their own nature humbling, and much the same to us as the breaking of a horse or a bull is to them. And I believe there are many cases in which there can be no accounting for them, but by recurring to this use God has for them.

4. Of affliction. Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride; for it is very hard to keep a low spirit with a high and prosperous lot. But God, by affliction, calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their gay feathers in which they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, by which it appears more in its native deformity. There are various kinds of affliction, some more, some less humbling, but all of them are humbling.

Wherefore, not to lower the spirit under the affliction is to attempt to rise up when God is casting and holding us down; and cannot fail, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces. For the afflicting hand of God is mighty.

5. Of sin, as the punishment of sin. We may allude to that. All the sin in the world is a punishment of Adam's first sin. Man threw himself into the mire at first, and now he is justly left weltering in it. Men wilfully make one false step, and for that cause they are justly left to make another worse; and sin hangs about all, even the best. And this is overruled of God for our humiliation, that we may be ashamed, and never open our mouth any more. Wherefore, not to be humbled under our sinfulness is to rise up against the mighty hand of God, and to justify all our sinful departings from Him, as lost to all sense of duty, and void of shame.

06.03. Part 3

Thomas Boston The Crook in the Lot

"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He has made crooked? "—Ecclesiastes 7:13.

III. What it is in humbling circumstances to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. This is the great thing to be aimed at in our humbling circumstances. And we may take it up in these eight things.

1. Noticing God’s mighty hand, as employed in bringing about everything that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission. "And he said, It is the Lord; let him do what seems him good. " "And the king said, The Lord has said to him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore have you done so?" He is the fountain of all perfection, but we must trace our imperfections to His sovereign will. It is He that has posted every one in their relations by His providence; without Him we could not meet with such contradictions; for, "The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it wherever He pleases." He sends afflictions, and justly punishes one sin with another.

2. A sense of our own worthlessness and nothingness before him. Looking to the infinite Majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should say, with Abraham, "Behold, I am but dust and ashes;" and say amen to the cry, "All flesh is grass. " &c. The keeping up of thoughts of our own excellency under the pressure of God’s mighty hand is the very thing that swells the heart in pride, causing it to rise up against it. And it is the letting of all such thoughts of ourselves fall before the eyes of His glory that is the humbling required.

3. A sense of our guilt and filthiness. The mighty hand does not press us down, but as sinners; it is meet then that under it we see our sinfulness; our guilt, by which we shall appear criminals justly caused to suffer: our filthiness, whereupon we may be brought to loathe ourselves; and then we shall think nothing lays us lower than we well deserve. It is the overlooking our sinfulness that allows the proud heart to swell.

4. A silent submission under the hand of God. His sovereignty challenges this of us. "Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" And nothing but unsubdued pride of spirit can allow us to answer again under His sovereign hand. A view of His sovereignty humbled and awed the Psalmist into submission, with a profound silence. "I was dumb, I did not open my mouth, because You did it." "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed is the name of the Lord. " And, "What shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther. " And Eli, "It is the Lord; let Him do what pleases Him. "

5. A magnifying of His mercies towards us in the midst of all His proceedings against us. Has He laid us low? If we are duly humbled we shall wonder He has laid us no lower. For however low the

humble are laid, they will see they are not yet so low as their sins deserve.

6. A holy and silent admiration of the ways and counsels of God, as to us unsearchable. Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the Divine proceedings, pretends to see through them, censures freely, and condemns; but humiliation of spirit disposes a man to think awfully and honorably of those mysteries of Providence he is not able to see through.

7. A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our dignity, by which we excel others. Pride feeds itself on the man's real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and, being so use to practising it before others, cannot forget it before God. "God, I thank You I am not as other men. " But humiliation of spirit makes it all vanish before him, as does the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man, in his own eyes, lower than any. "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. "

8. A submitting readily to the meanest offices requisite in or agreeable to our circumstances. Pride at every turn finds something that is below the man to condescend, or stoop to, measuring by his own mind and will, not by the circumstances God has placed him in. But humility measures by the circumstances one is placed in, and readily falls in with what they require. Concerning this our Savior gave us an example to be imitated: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death. " "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. "

Use. Of exhortation. Let the bent of your heart, then, in all your humbling circumstances, be towards the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things.

1. Carefully notice all your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. Observe your imperfections; inferiority in relations; contradictions you meet with; your afflictions; uncertainty of all things about you; and your sinfulness. Look through them designedly, and consider the steps of the conduct of Providence toward you in these, that you may know yourselves, and may not be strangers at home, blind to your own real state and case.

2. Observe what these circumstances require of you, as suitable to them; bend your endeavors towards it, to bring your spirits into that temper of humiliation, that, as your lot is really low in all these respects, so your spirits may be low too, as under the mighty hand of God. Let this be your great aim through your whole life, and your exercise every day.

Motive 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. However high any are lifted up in this world, Providence has hung certain badges for humiliation on them, whether they will notice them or not. Now, it is our duty to fall in with the design of Providence, that while God is humbling us we may be humbled ourselves, and that we may not receive humbling dispensations in vain.

2. The humiliation of our spirit will not take effect without our own agency in there: while God is working on us that way, we must work together with Him; for He works on us as rational agents, who, being moved, move themselves. God by His providence may force down our lot and condition without us, but the spirit must come down voluntarily and of choice, or not at all; therefore, strike in with humbling providences in humbling yourselves, as mariners spread out the sails when the wind begins to blow that they may go away before it.

3. If you do not you resist the mighty hand of God. You resist in so far as you do not yield, but stand as a rock, keeping your ground against your Maker in humbling providences. "You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; you have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. " Much more when you work against Him to force up your condition, which you may see God means to hold down. And of this resistance consider.

(1.) The sinfulness; what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God, a shaking off of subjection to our sovereign Lord, and a rising in rebellion against him.

(2.) The folly of it. How unequal is the match! How can the struggle end well? What else can possibly be the issue of the potsherds of the earth dashing against the Rock of ages, but that they are broken to pieces? All men must certainly bow or break under the mighty hand of God.

4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life. Everything is beautiful in its season; and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful, as in the time of it, even as the ploughing and sowing of the ground is in the spring. Consider,

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is in the sight of God of great price. As he has a special aversion to pride of heart, he has a special liking of humility. The humbling of sinners and bringing them down from their heights, in which the corruption of their nature has set them, is the great end of His Word and of His providences.

(2.) It is no easy thing to humble men’s spirits; it is not a little that will do it; it is a work that is not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion. Many a stroke must be given at the root of the tree of the natural pride of the heart before it falls; often it seems to be fallen, and yet it arises again. And even when the root stroke is given in believers, the rod of pride buds again, so that there is still occasion for new humbling work.

(3.) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the Israelites had in the wilderness. It was so to Christ, and therefore it must be so to men. And in that time they must either be formed according to His image, or else appear as reprobate silver that will not take it on by any means. So that whatever lifting up men may now and then get in this life, the habitual course of it will still be humbling.

(4.) There is no humbling after this. If the pride of the heart is not brought down in this life it will never be; no kindly humiliation is to be expected in the other life. There the proud will be broken in pieces, but not softened; their lot and condition will be brought to the lowest pass, but the pride of their spirits will still remain, from which they will be in eternal agonies, through the opposition between their spirits and lot.

Therefore, beware lest you sit your time of humiliation: humbled we must be, or we are gone forever; and this is the time, the only time of it; therefore, make your hay while the sun shines; strike in with humbling providences, and do not fight against them while you have them. The season of grace will not last; if you sleep in seedtime, you will beg in harvest.

5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good account; so that, instead of being losers, you would be gainers by them. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. " Would you gather grapes of these thorns and thistles, set yourselves to get your spirits humbled by them.

Humiliation of spirit is a most valuable thing in itself. It cannot be bought too dear. Whatever one is made to suffer, if his spirit is by that means duly brought down, he has what is well worth bearing all the hardship for.

Humility of spirit brings many advantages along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well loaden, wherever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross. It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God. The eye of God is particularly on such for good. "To this man I will look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word " Yea, He dwells with them. And it carries a line of wisdom through one's whole conduct: "with the lowly is wisdom. "

6. Consider it is a mighty hand that is at work with us—the hand of the mighty God; let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider,

(1.) We must fall under it. Since the design of it is to bring us down we cannot stand before it; for it cannot miscarry in its designs. "My counsel shall stand. " So fall before it we must, either in the way of duty or judgment. "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, by which the people fall under You. "

(2.) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they ever so low, the same hand will raise them up again. In a word, be the proud ever so high, God will bring them down; be the humble ever so low, God will raise them up.

Directions For Reaching This Humiliation.

1. General Directions.

Direct. 1. Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of Providence towards you. Until your heart has gotten set, your humiliation is not to be expected. But nothing is more reasonable if we would act either like men or Christians, than to aim at turning what is so grievous to the flesh to the profit of the spirit; that if we are losers on one hand we may be gainers on another.

2. Settle the matter of your eternal salvation in the first place, by going to Christ, and taking God for your God in Him, according to the Gospel-offer. Let your humbling circumstances move you to this, that while the creature dries up, you may go to the Fountain: for it is impossible to reach due humiliation under His mighty hand, without faith in Him as your God and friend.

3. Use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise. Moses, smiting the rock in faith of the promise, made water gush out, which otherwise would not at all have appeared. Let us do likewise in dealing with out rocky hearts. They must be laid on the soft bed of the Gospel, and struck there, as "Turn to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful;" or they will never kindly break or fall in humiliation.

II. Particular Directions.

1. Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances that you are in so humbling but you may get your heart acceptably brought down to them. "But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. " This is truth. "My grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made

perfect in weakness." And you should be persuaded of it, with application to yourselves, if ever you would reach the end. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. " God allows you to be persuaded of it, whatever is your weakness and the difficulty of the task. "For our sakes this is written, that he that ploughs should plough in hope; and he that threshes in hope shall be partaker of his hope. " And the belief of it is a piece of the life of faith. If you have no hope of success, your endeavors, as they will be heartless, so they will be vain. "Therefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees. "

2. Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, take God for your part, and consider yourselves in there as under His mighty hand. Men in their humbling circumstances overlook God, so they do not find themselves called to humility under them; they fix their eyes on the creature instrument, and instead of humility, their hearts rise. But take Him for your party that you may remember the battle and do no more.

3. Be much in the thoughts of God’s infinite greatness; consider His holiness and majesty, to awe you into the deepest humiliation. Job met with many humbling providences in his case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord made a new discovery of Himself to him, in His infinite majesty and greatness. He kept his ground against his friends, and stood to his points, till the Lord took that method with him. It was begun with thunder. Then followed God’s voice out of the whirlwind, by which Job is brought down. It is renewed till he is further humbled, "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. "

4. Make it your habit to silently admit mysteries in the conduct of Providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" That was the first word God said to Job, "who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" It went to his heart, stuck with him, and he comes over it again, as that which particularly brought him to his knees, to the dust. Even in those steps of Providence which we seem to see far into, we may well allow there are some mysteries beyond what we see. And in those which are perplexing and puzzling, sovereignty should silence us; His infinite wisdom should satisfy, though we cannot see.

5. Be much in the thoughts of your own sinfulness. "Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth. " It is overlooking of that which gives us so much ado with humbling circumstances. While the eyes are held that they cannot see sin the heart rises against them; but when they are opened, it falls. Therefore, whenever God is dealing with you in humbling dispensations, turn your eyes, on that occasion, on the sinfulness of your nature, heart, and life, and that will help forward your humiliation.

6. Settle it in your heart that there is need of all the humbling circumstances you are put in. This is truth, "Though now for a season (if need be) you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." God brings no needless trials on us, afflicts none but as their need requires: "For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." That is an observable difference between our earthly and our heavenly Father’s correction: "They, after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. " Look to the temper of your own hearts and nature, how apt to be lifted up, to forget God, to be carried away with the vanities of the world: what foolishness is bound up in your heart. Thus you will see the need of humbling circumstances for

ballast, and of the rod for the fool’s back; and if at any time you cannot see that need, believe it on the ground of God’s infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain.

7. Believe a kind design of Providence in them towards you. God calls us to this, as the key that opens the heart under them. Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, as the bar which may hold it shut: "This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" As long as the suspicion of an ill design in them against us reigns, the creature will, like the worm at the man’s feet, put itself in the best posture of defence it can, and harden itself in sorrow; but the faith of a kind design will cause it to open out itself in humility before Him.

Case. "Oh, if I knew there were a kind design in it, I would willingly bear it, although there were more of it; but I fear a ruining design of Providence against me in it. "

Answ. Now, what word of God, or discovery from heaven, have you to ground these fears on? None at all but from hell. What do you think the design towards you in the Gospel is? Can you believe no kind design in all the words of grace there heaped up? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell, flying in the face of the truth of God, and making Him a liar. The Gospel is a breathing of love and good-will to the world of mankind sinners. But you do not believe it, in that case, more than devils believe it. If you can believe a kind design there, you must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of Providence cannot be contrary to the design of the Gospel; but contrariwise, the latter is to help forward to the other.

8. Think with yourselves, that this life is the time of trial for heaven. "Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him." And therefore there should be a welcoming of humbling circumstances in that view, "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. " If there is an honourable office or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trial for it, in hope they may be in this way legally admitted to it. Now God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teaches; and shall men be so very loath to stoop to them? I would ask you,

(1.) Is it nothing to you to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trial for heaven? Is there not an honor in it, an honor which all the saints have had? "Behold, we count them happy that endure, " &c. And a fair prospect in it? "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Do but put the case, that God should overlook you in that case, as one whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that He should order you your portion in this life with full ease, as one that is to get no more of Him; what would that be?

(2.) What a vast disproportion is there between your trials and the future glory! Your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of it! The longest continuance of Hem is but for a moment, compared with that eternal weight. Alas! There is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under humbling circumstances. Had we a clearer view of the other world we should not make so much of either the smiles or frowns of this.

(3.) What do you think of coming foul off in the trial of your humbling circumstances? "The lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melts in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord has rejected them. " That the issue of it is only that your heart appear of such a temper as by no means to be humbled; and that therefore you must

and shall be taken off them, while yet no humbling appears. I think the awfulness of the dispensation is such as might set up to our knees to deprecate the lifting us up from our humbling circumstances, before our hearts are humbled.

9. Think with yourselves, how, by humbling circumstances, the Lord prepares us for heaven. "Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed, before they are set up in the building; and not set up just as they come out of the quarry and wood. Were they capable of a choice, such of them as would refuse the iron tool would be refused a place in the building. Pray, how do you think to be made suitable for heaven by the warm sunshine of this world's ease, and getting all your will here? Nay, sirs, that would put your mouth out of taste for the joys of the other world. Vessels of dishonour are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honor for glory by humbling circumstances. I would here say,

(1.) Will nothing please you but two heavens, one here, another hereafter? God has secured one heaven for the saints, one place where they shall get all their will, wish, and desire; where there shall be no weight on them to hold them down; and that is in the other world. But you must have it both here and there or you cannot digest it. Why do you not quarrel, too, that there are not two summers in one year; two days in the twenty-four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as that of the years and days, and you cannot reverse it. Therefore, choose whether you will take your night or your day first, your winter or your summer, your heaven here or hereafter.

(2.) Without being humbled with humbling circumstances in this life you are not capable of heaven. "Now, he that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God. " You may indeed lie at ease here in a bed of sloth and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, wishing to cast yourselves just out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom; but except you be humbled you are not capable,

(1.) Of the Bible-heaven, that heaven described in the Old and New Testaments. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But, how shall you be lifted up that are never well got down? Where will your tears be to be wiped away? What place will there be for your triumph, who will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you who cannot submit to labor?

(2.) Of the saints' heaven. "And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This answers the question about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints with them there. They were brought down to the dust by humbling circumstances, and out of these they came before the throne. How can you ever think to be lifted up with them with whom you cannot think to be brought down?

(3.) Of Christ's heaven. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God " Oh! Consider how the Forerunner made His way. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And lay your account with it that if you get where He is you must go there as He went. "And He said, If any man win come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. "

10. Give up at length with your towering hopes from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Be as pilgrims and strangers here, looking for your rest in heaven, and not till you come there. There is a prevailing evil. "You are wearied in the greatness of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope. " So the Babel-building is still continued, though it has fallen down again

and again. For men say, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. " This makes humbling work very lonesome; we are so hard to quit hold of the creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned. But fasten on the other world, and let your hold of this go; so shall you "be humbled" indeed under "the mighty hand." The faster you hold the happiness of that world the easier it will be to accommodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here.

II. Make use of Christ in all His offices for your humiliation under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliation that comes in His way. "And they shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn," &c. This you must do by trusting on Him for that effect.

(1.) As a Priest for you. You have a conscience full of guilt, and that will make one uneasy in any circumstances; it will be like a thorn in the shoulder on which a burden is laid. But the blood of Christ will purge the conscience, draw out the thorn, give ease, and fit for service, doing our suffering. "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? "

(2.) As your Prophet to teach you. We have need to be taught rightly to discern our humbling circumstances; for often we mistake them so far that they prove an oppressive load; whereas, could we rightly see them, just as God sets them to us, they would be humbling, but not so oppressive. Truly we need Christ, and the light of His word and Spirit, to let us see your cross and trial as well as our duty.

(3.) As your King. You have a stiff heart, loath to bow, even in humbling circumstances: take a lesson from Moses what to do in such a case. "And he said, Let my Lord, I pray you, go among us (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity and our sin. " Put it in His hand that is strong and mighty. He is able to cause it to melt, and, like wax before the fire, turn to the seal.

Think on these directions in order to put them in practice, remembering—If you know these things you are happy if you do them. Remember, humbling work is a word that will fill your hand while you live here, and that you cannot come to the end of it till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you while you are in this lower world. A change of them you may get; but a freedom from them you cannot, till you come to heaven. So the humbling circumstances of our imperfections, relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainties, and sinfulness, will afford matter of exercise to us while here.—What remains of the purpose of this text I shall comprise in,—

Doctrine II.—There is a due time in which those that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God will certainly be lifted up.

1. Those who shall share of this lifting up must lay their account in the first place, with a casting down. "in the world you shall have tribulation. " There is no coming to the promised land, according to the settled method of grace, but through the wilderness: nor entering into this exaltation, but through a strait gate. If we cannot away with the casting down, we shall not taste the sweet of the lifting up.

2. Being cast down by the mighty hand of God, we must learn to lie still and quiet under it, till the same hand that cast us down raise us up, if we would share of this promised lifting up. It is not the being cast down into humbling circumstances by the providence of God, but the coming down of

our spirits under them, by the grace of God, that brings us within the compass of this promise.

3. Those who are never humbled in humbling circumstances shall never be lifted up in the way of this promise. Men may keep their spirits on the high bend in their humbling circumstances, and in that case may get a lifting up; but such a lifting up as will end in a more grievous fall. "Surely you set them in slippery places, you cast them down in a moment." But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances will find that their obstinacy will keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

4. Humility of spirit in humbling circumstances ascertains a lifting up out of them some time, with the good-will and favor of Heaven. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. " Solomon observes that "A soft answer turns away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." And so it is, that while the proud, through their obstinacy, do but wreath the yoke faster about their own necks, the humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces. "So the cannon will break down a stone wall, while yielding packs of wool take away its force.

5. There is an appointed time for the lifting up of those that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances. "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." To everything there is a time, as for humbling, so for lifting up. We do not know it but God knows it, Who has appointed it. Let not the humble one say, I shall never be lifted up. This is a time fixed for it, as precisely as for the rising of the sun after a long and dark night, or the return of the spring after a long and sharp winter.

6. It is not to be expected that immediately on one’s humbling himself, the lifting up is to follow. No: one is not merely to lie down under the mighty hand, but to lie still, waiting the due time; humbling work is lonesome work; the Israelites had forty years of it in the wilderness. God’s people must be brought to put a blank in His hand, as to the time; and while they have a long night of walking in darkness, must trust. "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. "

7. The appointed time for the lifting up is the due time, the time fittest for it, in which it will come most seasonably. "And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we do not faint. " For that is the time God has chosen for it; and be sure His choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom, is the best; and therefore faith sets to wait it. "He that believes shall not make haste. " Much of the beauty of anything depends on the timing of it, and He has fixed that in all that He does. "He has made everything beautiful in His time. "

8. The lifting up of the humble will not fail to come in the appointed and due time. Time makes no halting, it is running day and night; so the due time is fast coming, and when it comes it will bring the lifting up along with it. Let the humbling circumstances be ever so low, ever so hopeless, it is

impossible but the lifting up from them must come in the due time. A word, in the general, to the lifting up, abiding those that humble themselves. There is a two-fold lifting up.

1. A partial lifting up, competent to the humbled in time during this life. "I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me. " This is a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect while in this world, but no more. – These give a breathing to the weary, a change of burdens, but do not set them at perfect ease. So Israel, in the wilderness, in the midst of their many mourning times, had some singing ones.

2. A total lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death. "It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels, but carries their relief to perfection. Then He takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on forever. He then lifts them up to a height they were never at before, no, not even at their highest. He sets them quite above all that is low, and there fixes them, never to be brought down more. Now there is a due time for both these.

(1.) For the partial lifting up. Every time is not fit for it; we are not always fit to receive comfort and ease, or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times in which it is needful for His people to be "in heaviness," to have their "hearts brought down with grief: " But then there is a time really appointed for it in the Divine wisdom, when He will think it as needful to comfort them as before to bring down. "So that, contrariwise, you ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow. " We are, in that case, in the hand of God, as in the hand of our physician, who appoints the time the drawing plaster shall continue, and when me healing plaster shall be applied, and leaves it not to the patient.

(2.) For the total lifting up. When we are sore oppressed with our burdens, we are ready to think, O to be away, and set beyond them all! "As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, and as an hireling looks for the reward of his work; so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me." But it may be fitter, for all that, that we stay awhile, and struggle without our burdens. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith. " A few days might have taken Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but they would have been too soon there if they had made all that speed; so it was necessary mat they spend forty years in the wilderness till their due time of entering Canaan should come. And be sure the saints entering heaven will be convinced that the time of it is best chosen, and there will be a beauty in that it was no sooner. And thus a lifting up is secured for the humble.

If one should assure you, when reduced to poverty, that the time would certainly come yet that you should be rich; when sore sick, that you should not die of that disease, but certainly recover; that would help you to bear your poverty and sickness the better, and you would comfort yourselves with that prospect. However, one may continue poor, and never be rich, may be sick, and die of his disease; but whoever humble themselves under their humbling circumstances, we can assure them from the Lord's word they shall certainly, without all peradventure, be lifted up out of, and relieved from, their humbling circumstances; they shall certainly see the day of their ease and relief, when they shall remember their burdens as waters that fail. And you may be assured of it from the following considerations. The nature of God, duly considered, insures it. "The ford is

merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever. " The humbled soul, looking to God in Christ, may see three things in His nature jointly securing it.

1. Infinite power, that can do all things. No circumstances are so low but He can raise them; so entangling and perplexing but He can unravel them; so hopeless but He can remedy them. "Is anything too hard for the lord?" Be our case what it will, it is never past reach with Him to help it; but then it is the most proper season for Him to take it in hand when all others have given it over. "For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants; when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left. "

2. Infinite goodness inclining to help. He is good and gracious in His nature. And therefore His power is a spring of comfort to them. Men may be willing that are not able, or able that are not willing; but infinite goodness joining infinite power in God. may ascertain the humbled of a lifting up in due time. That is a word of inconceivable sweetness. "And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." He has the bowels of a father towards the humble. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. " Yea, bowels of mercy more tender than a mother to her sucking child. Wherefore, nevertheless His wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them there for a time, it is not possible He can leave them there altogether.

3. Infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances. "But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies; for He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." God sends afflictions for humbling, as the end and design to be brought about by them; when that is obtained, and there is no more use for them that way we may assure ourselves they will be taken off. The providence of God, viewed in its stated methods of procedures with its objects, insures it. Turn your eyes which way you will on the Divine providence, you may conclude from it that in due time the humble will be lifted up.

Observe the providence of God in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord’s humbled ones be idle spectators of these things. They are for our learning. "Thus says the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea, when the waves of it roar; the Lord of hosts is His name. If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nature before Me forever " Will the Lord’s hand keep such a steady course in the earth, sea, and visible heavens, as to bring a lifting up in them after a casting down, and only forget His humbled ones? No, by no means.

Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of it, about the man Christ, the most noble and august object of it, more valuable than a thousand worlds. Did not Providence keep this course with Him, first humbling Him, then exalting Him, and lifting Him up? First bringing Him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty-three years, then exalting Him to the Father’s right hand in an eternity of glory? "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. " "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedience unto death, even the death of the

cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him." The exaltation could not fail to follow His humiliation. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And He saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed does the sowing it. There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have here. This is the pattern Providence copies after in its conduct towards you. The Father was so well pleased with this method in the case of His own Son, that it was determined to be followed and just copied over again in the case of all the heirs of glory. "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 brothers." And who would not be pleased to walk through the darkest valley treading His steps? This is a sure pledge of your lifting up. Christ, in His state of humiliation, was considered as a public person and representative, and so is He in His exaltation. So Christ's exaltation insures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstances. "Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust. " "Come and let us return to the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us. In the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. " "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus " Yea, He is gone into the state of glory for us as our forerunner. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever. '' His humiliation was the price of your exaltation, and His exaltation a testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full. There are no humbling circumstances you are in, but you would have perished in them, had not He purchased your lifting up out of them by His own humiliation. Now, His humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of His humiliation for your lifting up.

Observe the providence of God towards the Church in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her. Abel was slain by wicked Cain, to the great grief of Adam and Eve and the rest of their pious children; but then there was another seed raised up in Abel's room. Noah and his sons were buried alive in the ark for more than a year; but then they were brought out into a new world and blessed. Abraham for many years went childless; but at length Isaac was born. Israel was long in miserable bondage in Egypt; but at length seated in the promised land, &c. We must be content to go by the footsteps of the flock; and if in humiliation, we shall surely follow them in exaltation too.

Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of His grace towards His children. The general rule is. "For God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. " How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before? And ordinarily the greater the measure of grace designed for any, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in Paul's case. If they are to be recovered out of a backsliding case, the same method is followed: so that the deepest humiliation ordinarily makes way for the greatest comfort, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of righteousness on them.

Observe the providence of God at length throwing down wicked men, however long they stand and prosper, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. " They are long green before the sun, but at length they are suddenly smitten with an east wind, and wither away; their lamp goes out with a stench, and they are put out in obscure darkness. Now, it is inconsistent with the benignity of the Divine nature to forget the humble to raise them, while He minds the proud to abase them. The word of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning

to the end, is the humbled saint’s security for a lifting up. "Remember the word to Your servant, on which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for Your word has quickened me. " His word is the great letter of His name, which He will certainly cause to shine, "For you have magnified Your word above all Your name;" and in all generations has been safely relied on. Consider,

1. The doctrines of the word; which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue which the exercise of these graces will have. The whole current of Scripture, to those in humbling circumstances, is, "not to cast away their confidence, but to hope to the end;" and that for this good reason, "that it shall not be in vain. " "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord. " "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me. "

2. The promises of the word, by which heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to those that humble themselves in humbling circumstances: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up;" "And he that humbles himself shall be exalted " It may take a time to prepare them for lifting up, but that being done it is secured. "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hears " They have His word for deliverance. And though they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not be always so; the time of their deliverance will come. "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. "

3. The examples of the word sufficiently confirming the truth of the doctrines and promises. "For whatever things were written before, were written for our learning: that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. " In the doctrines and promises the lifting up is proposed to our faith, to be reckoned on the credit of God’s word; but in the examples it is, in the case of others, set before our eyes to be seen. "Behold, we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. " There we see it in the case of Abraham, Job, David, Paul, and other saints; but above all in the case of the man Christ.

4. The intercession of Christ, joining the prayers and cries of His humbled people, in their humbling circumstances, insures a lifting up for them at length. Be it so, that the proud cry not when He binds them; yet His own humbled ones will certainly cry to Him. "Deep calls to deep at the noise of your water-sprouts; all your waves and your billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life. " And though unbelievers may soon be worn out and give it over altogether, surely believers will not do so. But even if they do so in a fit of temptation, dropping their hands in hopelessness, they will find it necessary to take it up again "Then I said, I will not make mention of Him nor speak His name any more. But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with holding back, and I could not stay. " They will cry night and day unto him, knowing no time for giving it over till they be lifted up. "My eye trickles down and does not cease or hare any intermission until the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven." Now, when Christ’s intercession is joined with these cries, there cannot but fail to be a lifting up. And Christ’s intercession is certainly joined with the cries and prayers of the humbled in their humbling circumstances, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there

was given to him much incense, so that he might offer it with the prayers of all saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. " They are helped to groan for relief by the Spirit, and the prayers and groans which are through the Spirit are certainly to be made effectual by the intercession of the Son. And you may know they are by the Spirit if it happens that you are helped to continue praying, hoping for your relief on the ground of God's word of promise. For that praying which is by nature is a pool that will dry up in a long drought. The Spirit of prayer is the lasting spring. "In the day when I cried, You answered me and strengthened me with strength in my soul. " Truly there is an intercession in Heaven, on account of the humbling circumstances of the humble ones, "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, 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 seventy years?" How then can they fail to get a lifting up in due time?

Christ is in deep earnest in His intercession for His people in their humbling circumstances. Some will speak a good work in favor of the helpless, that would not be concerned if they succeed or not, but our Intercessor is in earnest in behalf of His humbled ones. For He is touched with sympathy in their case, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." A most tender sympathy has He; "For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. " He has their case upon His heart, where He is in the holy place in the highest heavens, and He keeps an exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, however long it may be. And it is His own business. The lifting up which they are to have is a thing that is secured to Him in the promises made to Him on account of the blood He shed for them. So not only are they looking on earth, but the man Christ is in Heaven looking for the accomplishment of these promises, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; from that time on expecting until His enemies should be made His footstool. " How is it possible, then, that He should be frustrated? Again, these humbling circumstances are still His own sufferings, though not in His person, yet in His members. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for has body's sake, which is the church." Therefore there is all ground to conclude that He is in deep earnest. His intercession is always effectual, "And I know that You hear Me always. " It cannot fail to be so, because He is the Father's well-beloved Son. His intercession has a plea of justice for its ground, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. " And He has all power in Heaven and in earth lodged in Him And, finally, He and His Father are one, and their will is one. So both Christ and His Father desire the lifting up of the humble ones, but yet only in due time.

I now proceed to a more particular view of the point: We will consider the lifting up as brought about in time, which is the partial lifting up. This lifting up does not take place in every case of a child of God. One may be humbled in low circumstances from which he is not to get a lifting up in time. We would not from the promise presently conclude that we, being humbled under our low circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them and freed from them before we get to the end of our journey. For it is certain there are some humiliating things which we can by no means be rid of while in this world, such as our imperfections, our sinfulness, and our mortality. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may bring about us, and keep about us, until we go down to the grave. Yet at the same time He may lift up another from the same circumstances. Heman was pressed down all along, from his youth onward; but others have been pressed down all their lifetime.

Objections: If that is the case, what about the promise to lift us up? Where is the lifting up if one may go to the grave under the weight?

Answer: If there were no life after this, there would perhaps be ground for such an objection. But since there is another life, there is no valid objection to be made. In the other life the promise will be accomplished to those who have been humbled. Consider that the great term for accomplishment of the promises is the other life, and not this one—"These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off; and they were persuaded of them and embraced them. "Whatever accomplishment of the promise is here it is not of the nature of a stock, but it is but a sample or a pledge.

Question: But then may we not stop praying for the lifting up in that case?

Answer: No, because we do not know when that is our case. For a case may be past all hope in our eyes and in the eyes of others, yet God may design a lifting up in time. This was Job's case, "What is my strength that I should hope? And what is my end that I should prolong my life?" But, be that as it may, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray for it—if not here, then hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment; therefore such praying cannot fail to have a happy issue at length, "Call on Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." The whole life of a Christian is a praying, waiting life. And we are given temporal deliverances as pledges to encourage us to it. "And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body. " And whoever observes that full lifting up at death to be at hand must certainly rise, if he has given over his case as hopeless.

However, there are some cases in which this lifting up does not take place. God gives His people some notable deliverances, even in time raising them out of remarkably humbling circumstances. The storm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail.

Some may be in humbling circumstances very long, heavy and hopeless circumstances, and yet a lifting up be held back for a long time. This is sometimes the case with the children of God who are set to bear the yoke in their youth as it was with Joseph and David; or of those that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with Job, who could not have been less than forty years old when his trouble came; but afterwards he lived one hundred and forty years. God by such methods prepares a man for peculiar usefulness.

Others may be in humbling circumstances, heavy and long, and may be quite hopeless in the ordinary course of providence, yet they may get a lifting up before they come to their journey's end. The life of some of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, in which the sun breaks out from under the clouds in the afternoon, shining fair and clear a little, and then it sets. ("And it shall happen in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall happen that at evening time it shall be light. ") Such was the case with Jacob in his old age, brought in honor and comfort into Egypt, to his son, and then he died.

Yet whatever liftings up they may get in this life, they will never lack some weights to hang on them for their humbling. They may have their singing times, but their songs while in this world will be mixed with groanings, "For we that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened." The unmixed

dispensation is reserved for the other world. But this one will be a wilderness to the very end, where there will be howlings alongside of the most joyful notes.

All the liftings up which the humbled meet with now are pledges, and only pledges and samples of the great lifting up which awaits them on the other side. And they should look upon them as such, "And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. " Our Lord is now leading His people through the wilderness, and the manna and the water of the rock are earnests of the milk and honey flowing in the promised land. They have not yet come home to their Father’s house, but they are travelling on the road. And their elder brother Christ is with them, bearing their expenses, taking them into inns for rest by the way, and as it were, refreshing them with partial liftings up. But then they must get on the road again. And that entertainment by the way is but a pledge of the full entertainment He will give them when they arrive at their eternal home.

Objection: But people may get a lifting up here in time, yet there is no pledge of a lifting up on the other side. How then shall I know it is a pledge?

Answer: That lifting up which comes by the promises is certainly a pledge of the full lifting up in the other world. For, as the other life is the proper time for the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure that when God once begins to clear His bond, He will certainly hold on until it is fully cleared. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." So we may say, as Naomi said to Ruth, when she received the six measures of barley from Boaz, "He will not rest until he has finished the thing today." There are liftings up that come by common providence and these indeed are single, not being pledges of more. But the promise chains mercies together, so that one received is a pledge of another to come; yea, of the whole chain to the end.

Question: But how shall I know that the lifting up comes by way of the promise?

Answer: That which comes by the way of the promise comes in the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope and patient continuance, "Therefore, be patient, brothers, to the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and he has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain." Humility prepares for the accomplishment of the promise, faith sucks its breast, and patient waiting hangs by the breast until the milk comes flowing forth abundantly. But no liftings up of God’s children here are any more than pledges of lifting up. God gives worldly men their stock here, but His children get nothing but a sample of theirs here. Even as the servant at the term gets his fee in a round sum, while the young heir gets nothing but a few pence for spending money. The truth is, this same spending money is more valuable than the world’s stock "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." But though it is better than that and their services too and worth more than all their waiting, yet it is below the honor of their God to put them off with it, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one; therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. "

We shall now consider what they will get by this lifting up promised to the humbled ones. They will get:

1. A removal of their humbling circumstances. God having tried them a while humbling them and bringing down their hearts, will at length take their burden off, remove the weight that has hung on them so long, and so will take them off that part of their trial joyfully. And He will let them get up, though their back has been long bowed down. And this He will do in two ways: either in kind, or by a total removal of the burden. Job got such a lifting up when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been desolated. When his persecutor Saul fell in battle, David was brought to the kingdom after many a weary day, yet he had expected one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances. Or the equivalent good, removing the weight of the burden so that it does not press them down any more, even though it remains. "And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather glory in my infirmities, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities. " Though they may not yet be to the shore, yet their head is no longer under the water, but lifted up. David speaks feelingly of such a lifting up, "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion. In the secret of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me on a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises to the Lord." Such an experience overwhelmed the Hebrews in the fiery furnace: the fire burned, but it could burn nothing but their bonds; they had its warmth and its light, but nothing of the scorching heat.

2. A comfortable sight of the acceptance of their prayers which they put up in their humbling circumstances. While prayers are not answered, but trouble continued, they are apt to think they are not accepted or regarded in Heaven, because there is no change in their case, "If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I would not believe that He had listened to my voice, for He breaks me with a tempest." But that is a mistake! They are accepted immediately, even though there does not seem to be an answer to prayer, "And this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." The Lord does with them as a father with the letters coming thick from his son abroad, He reads them one by one with pleasure and carefully lays them up to be answered at His convenience. And when the answer comes, the son will know how acceptable they were to his father.

3. A heart-satisfying answer to their prayers, so that they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer. And they will put a double value on the mercy. Accepted prayers may not be answered for a long time; in Abraham’s and David’s case it was many years, but they cannot miscarry or be unanswered at length. The time will come when God will count it out to them according to the promise, and they shall change their note and say, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplication:" looking on their lifting up as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer-hearing God.

4. Full satisfaction’ as to the conduct of Providence, in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up, however perplexing these were before. Standing on the shore and looking back to what they have passed through, they will be made to say, "He has done all things well. " Those things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through are very sweet when we reflect on them (Samson’s riddle is then verified in their experience).

5. They get the lifting up, together with the interest for the time they lay out of it. When God pays His bonds of promises, He pays both principal and interest together: the mercy is increased according to me time they waited, and the expenses and hardships sustained during the dependence of the process. The fruits of common providence are soon ripe, soon rotten. But the fruit of the promise is often a long time ripening, but then it endures. And the longer it takes to ripen, the more valuable it is when it comes. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise about ten years, and at length they thought of a way to hasten it. It soon took, in the birth of Ishmael, but he was not the promised son. They were coming into extreme old age before the promise was brought forth. But when it came, they got it with an addition of the renewing of their ages. The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in being fulfilled, namely, the promise of Christ, being about four thousand years.

6. The spiritual enemies that flew thick about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, these will be scattered at this lifting up in the promise.

"And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over my enemies. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased" Formidable was Pharaoh’s host behind the Israelites, while they had the Red Sea before them; but when they were through the sea, they saw the Egyptians dead on the shore. Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies when the time comes for their lifting up.

We come now to the due time of His lifting up. That is a natural question of those who are in humbling circumstances, "Watchman, what of the night? " And we cannot answer it to the humbled soul, but in the general.

06.03a. Part 3 cont'd

The lifting up of the humbled will not be lonesome, considering the weight of the matter; that is to say, considering the worth and value of the lifting up of the humble; when it comes, it can by no means be reckoned long to the time of it. When you sow your corn in the fields, though it does not ripen so soon as some garden-seeds, but you wait three months or so, you do not think the harvest long a coming, considering the value of the crop. This view the apostle takes of the lifting up in humbling circumstances, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. " So that a believer, looking on the promise with an eye of faith, and perceiving its accomplishment, and the worth of it when accomplished, may wonder it is come so shortly. Therefore, it is determined to be a time that comes soon, soon in respect of its weight and worth. When the time comes, it and only it will appear the due time. To every thing there is a season, and a great part of Wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in this season of it. And we may be sure infinite Wisdom cannot miss the season, by mistaking it. "He is a rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment. " But whatever God does will abide the strictest examination, in that, as all other points. "I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God does it that men may fear before Him. " It is true, many times, appear to us as the due time for lifting up, which yet really is not so, because there are some circumstances hid from us, which render that season unfit for the thing. Thus, "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready." But when all the circumstances, always foreknown to God, shall come to be opened out, and laid together before us, we shall then see the lifting up is come in the time most for the honor of God and our good, and that it would not have done so well sooner. When the time comes that is really the due time, the proper time for the lifting up a child of God from his humbling circumstances, it will not be put off one moment longer. "At the end it shall speak; it will surely come, it will not tarry. " Though it tarry, it will not linger, nor be put off to another time. Oh, what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! There is not a child of God but would, with the utmost earnestness, protest against a lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit cast to him by an angry father, which would set his teeth on edge. Since it is so, then, could we firmly believe this point, that it will undoubtedly come in the due time, without losing of a minute, it would afford a sound rest. It must be so because God has said it; were the case ever so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will blow (Hebrew),—a metaphor from the wind rising in a moment after a dead calm. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of hopelessness before the lifting up. The knife was at Isaac’s throat before the voice was heard. "For we would not, brothers, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia; that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raises the dead. " Things soon seem to us arrived at that point; such is the hastiness of our spirits. But things may have far to go down after we think they are at the foot of the hill. And we are almost as little competent judges of the point of hopelessness, as of the due time of lifting up. But generally God carries His people’s humbling circumstances downward, still downward, till they

come to that point. In this God is holding the same course which He held in the case of the man Christ, the beloved pattern copied after in all the dispensations of Providence towards the Church and every particular believer. He was all along a man of sorrows; as His time went on the waters swelled more, till He was brought to the dust of death; then He was buried, and the grave-stone sealed; which done, the world thought they were quit of Him, and He would trouble them no more. But they quite mistook it; then, and not till then, was the due time for lifting Him up. And the most remarkable liftings up that His people get are fashioned after this grand pattern.

Another end which Providence aims at is to carry the believer clean off his own and all created foundations, to fix his trust and hope in the Lord alone. "That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead " The life of a Christian here is designed to be a life of faith; and though faith may act more easily when it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts most nobly when it acts in opposition to sense. Then is it pure faith, when it stands only on its own native legs, the power and word of God. "And being not weak in faith, he did not consider His own body now dead - neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. " And thus is must do when matters are carried to the utmost point of hopelessness.

Again, due preparation of the heart, for the lifting up out of the humbling circumstances goes before the due time of that lifting up, according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up. The liftings up of common providences are not so critically managed; men will have them, will wait for them no longer, and God flings them in anger, before they are prepared for them. "I gave you a king in My anger." They can by no means abide the trial, and God takes then off as reprobate silver, that is not able to abide it. This due preparation consists in due humiliation. And it often takes much work to bring this about, which is another point that we are very incompetent judges of. We shall have thought Job was brought very low in his spirit by the providence of God bruising him on the one hand, and his friends on the other, for a long time. Yet, after all that he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to him Himself, for his humiliation. By that speech of God Himself, he was brought to his knees. And we should have thought he was men sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he thought so too. But God saw a further degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore begins again to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust. And when he was thus prepared for lifting up he got it.

There are six things, I conceive, belong to this humiliation, preparatory to lifting up.

1. A deep sense of sinfulness and unworthiness of being lifting up at all. "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth" People may be long in humbling circumstances before they are brought this length; even good men are much prejudiced in their own behalf, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals His favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. Elihu marks this fault in Job, under his humbling circumstances. And I believe it will be found, there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our own honor from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay on it than to vindicate the honor of God in the justice and equity of the dispensation. The blindness of an ill-natured world, still ready to suspect the worst causes for humbling circumstances, as if the greatest sufferers were surely the greatest sinners, gives a handle for this bias of the corrupt nature. But God is a jealous God, and when He appears sufficiently to humble, He will cause the matter of our honor to

give way to the vindication of His.

2. A resignation to the Divine pleasure as to the time of lifting up. God gives the promise, leaving the time blank as to us. Our time is always ready, and we rashly fill it up at our own hand. God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time. Thus we are ready to think His word fails whereas it is but our own rash conclusion from it that fails. "I said in my haste, All men are liars." Several of the saints have suffered much by this means, and in this way learned to let alone filling up that blank. The first promise was thus used by believing Eve. Another promise was so by believing Abraham, after about ten years' waiting.

If this is the case of any child of God, do not let them be discouraged on it thinking they were over-rash in applying the promise to themselves: they were only so in applying the time to the promise; a mistake that saints in all ages have made, which they repented, and saw the folly of, and let alone that point for the time to come; and then the promise was fulfilled in its own due time. Let them in such circumstances go and do likewise, leaving the time entirely to the Lord.

3. An entire resignation as to the way and manner of bringing it about. We are ready to do, as to the way of accomplishing the promise, just as with the time of it, to set a particular way for the Lord's working in it; and if that is not kept, the proud heart is stumbled. "But Naaman was angry, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place. " But the Lord will have His people broken off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to Him, but leave it to Him entirely, as in that case, "He went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and he was clean. " The compass of our knowledge of ways and means is very narrow, as, if one is blocked up. Often we cannot see another; but our God knows many ways of relief, where we know but one or none at all, and it is very usual for the Lord to bring the lifting up of His people in a way they had no view to, after repeating disappointments from those quarters from which they had great expectation.

4. Resignation as to the degree of the lifting up, yea, and as to the very being of it in time. The Lord will have His people weaned so, that however hastily they have sometimes been, that they behoved to be so soon lifted up, and could no longer bear, they shall be brought at length to set no time at all, but submit to go to the grave under their weight, if it seem good in the Lord's eyes. In that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much. "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again - But if He thus say, I have no delight in you; behold, here I am, let Him do as seems good to Him. "

5. The continuing of praying and waiting on me Lord in the case. "Praying always with an prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance." It is pride of heart, and unsubduedness of spirit that makes people give over praying and waiting, because their humbling circumstances are lengthened out time after time. But due humility, going before the lifting up, brings men to that temper to pray, wait, and hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over till the lifting up come, whether in time or eternity.

6. Mourning under mismanagements in the trial. "Therefore have I uttered that I did not understand things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. " The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man's sufferings in the trial, and casts out the folds of the trial on that side, and views them again

and again. But when the Spirit of Cod comes duly to humble, in order to lifting up, He will cause the man to pass, in a sort, the suffering side of the trial, and turn his eyes on his own conduct in it, ransack it, judge himself impartially, and condemn himself, so that his mouth will be stopped. This is that humility mat goes before the lifting up in time, in the way of the promise.

We proceed to consider the lifting up as brought about at the end of time, in the other world. And, 1st. A word as to the nature of this lifting up. Concerning it we shall say these face things:

1. There is a certainty of this lifting up, in all cases of the humbled under humbling circumstances. Though one cannot in every case make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it may, they will, without all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. " Though God’s humble children may both breakfast and dine on bread of adversity and water of affliction, they will be sure to sup sweetly and plentifully. And the believing expectation of the latter might serve to qualify the former, and make them easy under it.

2. It will be a perfect lifting up. They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials and special furnace, be what it will, that made them weary many a day. Lazarus was then delivered from his poverty and sores and lying at the rich man’s gate, and fully delivered. Yea, they will get a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All imperfections will then be at an end, inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long in coming, there will be a blessed moment when they shall get all together.

3. They will not only be raised out of their low condition, but they will be set up on high; as Joseph, not only brought out of prison, but made ruler over the land of Egypt. And they will be lifted up into a high place. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham ’s bosom. " Now they are at best but in a low place on this earth; there they will be seated in the highest heavens. Often, in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on His throne; "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne. " Though they now cleave to the earth, and men say, Bow down, that we may pass over you, they will then be settled in the heavenly mansions, above the sun, moon, and stars. They will also be lifted up into a high state and condition; a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasiness, they will be set in a state of rest; from their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory. Their burdened and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fullness of joy; and, for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honor.

4. It will be a final lifting up, after which there will be no more casting down forever. When we get a lifting up in time we are apt to imagine fondly we are at the end of our trials; but we soon find we are too hasty in our conclusions, and the cloud returns. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. You hid Your face, and I was troubled. " But then indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end, and then is the time of the retribution and triumph.

5. There will not be the least remaining uneasiness from the humbling circumstances, but, on the contrary, they will have a glorious and desirable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the remembrance of the humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his having five brothers on earth, how sumptuously he fared, how Lazarus sat at his

gate; and can we doubt but the saints will remember perfectly their heavy trials? But then they will remember them as waters that fail; as the man recovered to health remembers his tossings on the sick bed; and that is a way of remembering that sweetens the present state of health beyond what otherwise it would be. Certainly the shore of the Red Sea was the place that, of all places, was the fittest to help the Israelites to sing in the highest key. And the humbling circumstances of saints on the earth will be of the same use to them in heaven.

2ndly. A word to the due time of this lifting up. There is a particular, definite time for it in every saint's case, which is the due time, but it is hid from us. We can only say in general,

1. Then is the due time for it, when our work we have to do in this world is over. God has appointed to every one his task, fight, trial, and work; and, till that is done, we are in a sort immortal. That work is,

Doing work; work set to us by the great Master, to be done for the honor of God and the good of our fellow-creatures. We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that is done out. It is not the due time for that lifting up, till we are at the end of that work, and so have served our generation. And it is,

Suffering work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body; the Head has divided to the several members their proportions of it; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share of it allotted to us. Paul looked on his life as a going on in that.

2. When that lifting up comes we shall see it is come exactly in the due time; that it was well it was neither sooner nor later; for though heaven is always better than earth, and that it would be better for us, absolutely speaking, to be in heaven than on earth, yet certainly there is a time where it is better for the honour of God and His service that we are on the earth than in heaven. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. " And it will be no grief of heart to them when there, that they were so long in their humbling circumstances, and were not brought sooner.

Use 1. Let not then the humble cast away their confidence, whatever their humbling circumstances are; let them assure themselves there will come a lifting up to them at length; if not here, yet to be sure hereafter. Let them keep this in their view, and comfort themselves with it, for God has said it. "The needy shall not always be forgotten. '' If the night were ever so long, the morning will come at length.

2. Let patience have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the merchant for the return of his ships, the store-master for what he calls year-time, when he draws in the produce of his flocks. All these have long patience, and why should not the Christian too have patience, and patiently wait for the time appointed for his lifting up?

You have heard much of the Crook in the Lot; the excellency of humbleness of spirit in a low lot, beyond pride of spirit, though joined with a high one. You have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and have been assured in that case of a lifting up. To conclude: we may assure ourselves, God will at length break in pieces the proud, be they ever so high: and He will triumphantly lift up the humble, be they ever so low.

End.

Chapter 90

07.00. The Sinfulness of Man's Natural State

Thomas Boston Introduction to the Doctrine

Man’s Nature is Now Wholly CorruptedThe Corruption of the UnderstandingThe Corruption of the WillThe Corruption of the AffectionsThe Corruption of the ConscienceThe Corruption of the MemoryThe Corruption of the Body

God Takes Special Notice of our Natural Corruption

Men Overlooking their Natural Sin

Original Sin to be Specially Noticed

07.00i. Introduction to the Doctrine

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Genesis 6:5

We have seen what man was, as God made him; a lovely and happy creature. Let us view him now as he has unmade himself; and we shall see him a sinful and a miserable creature. This is the sad state we are brought into by the fail; a state as black and doleful as the former was glorious; and this we commonly call 'The State of Nature,' or 'Man's Natural State'; according to that of the apostle (Ephesians 2:3), 'And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' — And herein two things are to be considered: 1. The sinfulness 2. The misery of this state, in which all the unregenerate live. I begin with the sinfulness of man's natural state, whereof the text gives us a full, though short, account. The scope and design of these words is, to clear God's justice in bringing the flood on the old world. There are two particular causes taken notice of in the preceding verses: 1. Mixed marriages (Genesis 6:2), 'The sons of God,' the posterity of Seth and Enos, professors of the true religion, married with 'the daughters of men,' the profane, cursed race of Cain. They did not carry the matter before the Lord, that He might choose for them (Psalms 48:14), but without any respect to the will of God, they chose, not according to the rules of their faith, but of their fancy; they 'saw that they were fair;' and their marriage with them occasioned their divorce from God. This was one of the causes of the deluge, which swept away the old world. Would to God that all professors in our day could plead not guilty. But though that sin brought on the deluge, yet the deluge has not swept away that sin, which as of old, so in our day, may justly be looked upon as one of the causes of the decay of religion. It was an ordinary thing among the Pagans, to change their gods, as they changed their condition into a married lot: many sad instances the Christian world affords of the same; as if people were of Pharaoh's opinion, That religion is only for those who have no other care upon their heads (Exodus 5:17). 2. Great oppression (Genesis 6:4), 'There were giants in the earth in those days;' men of great stature, great strength, and monstrous wickedness, 'filling the earth with violence' (Genesis 6:11). But neither their strength, nor treasures of wickedness, could profit them in the day of wrath. Yet the gain of oppression still causes many to forget the terror of this dreadful example. Thus much for the connexion, and what particular crimes that generation was guilty of. But every person that was swept away by the flood could not be guilty of these things; and 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Therefore, in my text, there is a general indictment drawn up against them all, 'The wickedness of man was great in the earth,' and clearly proved, for God saw it. Two things are here laid to their charge:

1: Corruption of life, wickedness, great wickedness. I understand this of the wickedness of their lives; for it is plainly distinguished from the wickedness of their hearts. The sins of their outward conversation were great in the nature of them, and greatly aggravated by their attendant circumstances: and this not only among those of the race of cursed Cain, but those of holy Seth; the wickedness of man was great. And then it is added, 'in the earth:' 1. To vindicate God's severity, in that He not only cut off sinners, but defaced the beauty of the earth, and swept off the

brute creatures from it, by the deluge; that as men had set the marks of their impiety, God might set the marks of His indignation, on the earth. 2. To shew the heinousness of their sin, in making the earth, which God had so adorned for the use of man, a sink of sin, and a stage whereon to act their wickedness, in defiance of heaven. God saw this corruption of life: He not only knew it, and took notice of it, but He made them to know that He took notice of it, and that He had not forsaken the earth, though they, had forsaken heaven.

2: Corruption of nature: Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. All their wicked practices are here traced to the fountain and springhead: a corrupt heart was the source of all. The soul, which was made upright in all its faculties, is now wholly disordered. The heart that was made according to God's own heart, is now the reverse of it, a forge of evil imaginations, a sink of inordinate affections, and a storehouse of all impiety (Mark 7:21-22). Behold the heart of the natural man, as it is opened in our text. The mind is defiled; the thoughts of the heart are evil; the will and affections are defiled: the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, that is, whatsoever the heart frames within itself by thinking, such as judgment, choice, purposes devices, desires, every inward motion; or rather the frame of the thoughts of the heart, namely the frame, make, or mould of these (1 Chronicles 29:18), is evil. Yea, and every imagination, every frame of his thoughts, is so. The heart is ever framing something, but never one right thing: the frame of thoughts in the heart of man is exceedingly various; yet are they never cast into a right frame. But is there not, at least, a mixture of good in them? No, they are only evil; there is nothing in them truly good and acceptable to God: nor can any thing be so, that comes out of the forge where, not the Spirit of God, but 'the prince of the power of the air' works (Ephesians 2:2). Whatever changes may be found in them, are only from evil to evil; for the imagination of the heart, or frame of thoughts in natural men, is evil continually, or every day. From the first day to the last day, in this state, they are in midnight darkness; there is not the glimmering of the light of holiness in them; not one holy thought can ever be produced by the unholy heart. O what a vile heart is this! O what a corrupt nature is this! The tree that always brings forth fruit, but never good fruit, whatever soil it be set in, whatever pains be taken with it, must naturally be an evil tree: and what can that heart be, whereof every imagination, every set of thoughts, is only evil, and that continually? Surely that corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk into the marrow of our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace. Now such is man's heart, such is his nature, till regenerating grace change it. God that searches the heart saw man's heart was so. He took special notice of it: and the faithful and true Witness cannot mistake our case; though we are most apt to mistake ourselves in this point, and generally do overlook it.

Beware that there be not a thought in your wicked heart saying, What is that to us? Let that generation of whom the text speaks, see to that. For the Lord has left the case of that generation on record, to be a looking-glass to all after generations, wherein they may see their own corruption of heart, and what their lives would be too, if he restrained them not: for 'as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man' (Proverbs 27:19). Adam's fall has framed all men's hearts alike in this matter. Hence the apostle (Romans 3:10-18), proves the corruption of the nature, hearts, and lives of all men, from what the psalmist says of the wicked in his day (Psalms 14:1-3; Psalms 5:9; Psalms 140:3; Psalms 10:7; Psalms 36:1); and from what Jeremiah says of the wicked in his day (Jeremiah 9:3), and from what Isaiah says of those that lived in his time (Isaiah 57:7-8), and concludes (Isaiah 57:19), 'Now we know that what things soever the law saith,

it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' Had the history of the deluge been transmitted unto us, without the reason thereof in the text, we might thence have gathered the corruption and total depravity of man's nature: for what other quarrel could the holy and just God have with the infants that were destroyed by the flood, seeing they had no actual sin? If we saw a wise man, who having made a curious piece of work, and heartily approved of it when he gave it out of his hand, as fit for the use it was designed for, rise up in wrath and break it all in pieces, when he looked on it afterwards; should we not thence conclude that the frame of it had been quite marred since it came out of his hand, and that it does not serve for the use it was at first designed for? How much more, when we see the holy and wise God destroying the work of His own hands, once solemnly pronounced by Him very good, may we not conclude that the original frame thereof is utterly marred, that it cannot be mended, but must needs be new made, or lost altogether? (Genesis 6:6-7), 'And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man,' or blot him out; as a man doth a sentence out of a book, that cannot be corrected by cutting off some letters, syllables, or words, and interlining others here and there, but must needs be wholly new framed. But did the deluge carry off this corruption of man's nature? did it mend the matter? No, it did not. God, in His holy providence, 'that every mouth may be stopped,' and all the new 'world may become guilty before God,' as well as the old, permits that corruption of nature to break out in Noah, the father of the new world, after the deluge was over. Behold him, as another Adam, sinning in the fruit of a tree (Genesis 9:20-21), 'He planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent.' More than that, God gives the same reason against a new deluge, which he gives in our text for bringing that on the old world: 'I will not,' saith he, 'again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Genesis 8:21). Whereby it is intimated, that there is no mending of the matter by this means; and that if He should always take the same course with men that He had done, He would be always sending deluges on the earth, seeing the corruption of man's nature still remains. But though the flood could not carry off the corruption of nature, yet it pointed at the way how it is to be done; namely, that men must be 'born of water and of the Spirit,' raised from spiritual death in sin by the grace of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood; out of which a new world of saints arise in regeneration, even as the new world of sinners out of the waters, where they had long lain buried, as it were, in the ark. This we learn from 1 Peter 3:20-21, where the apostle, speaking of Noah's ark, says, 'Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.' Now the waters of the deluge being a like figure to baptism, it plainly follows, that they signified, as baptism does, 'the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' To conclude then, those waters, though now dried up, may serve us still for a looking-glass, in which we may see the total corruption of our nature, and the necessity of regeneration. From the text, thus explained, this weighty point of doctrine arises, which he that runs may read in it, namely:

DOCTRINE: Man's nature is now wholly corrupted

There is a sad alteration, a wonderful overturning in the nature of man: where, at first, there was nothing evil, now there is nothing good. In treating on this doctrine, I shall,

I: Confirm it.

II: Represent this corruption of nature in its several parts.

III: Shew you how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted.

IV: Apply this doctrine.

I: I shall confirm the doctrine of the corruption of nature.

I shall hold the glass to your eyes, wherein you may see your sinful nature; which, though God takes particular notice of it, many quite overlook. Here we shall consult the Word of God, and men's experience and observation. For Scripture proof, let us consider,

1: How the Scripture takes particular notice of fallen Adam's communicating his image to his posterity (Genesis 5:3), 'Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth.' Compare with this the first verse of that chapter, 'In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.' Behold here, how the image after which man was made, and the image after which he is begotten, are opposed. Man was created in the likeness of God; that is, the holy and righteous God made a holy and righteous creature, but fallen Adam begat a son, not in the likeness of God, but in his own likeness; that is, corrupt sinful Adam begat a corrupt sinful son. For as the image of God bore righteousness and immortality in it, as was shewn before; so this image of fallen Adam bore corruption and death in it (1 Corinthians 15:49-50, compare 1 Corinthians 15:22). Moses, in that fifth chapter of Genesis, giving us the first bill of mortality that ever was in the world, ushers it in with this, that dying Adam begat mortals. Having sinned, he became mortal, according to the threatening; and so he begat a son in his own likeness, sinful, and therefore mortal. Thus sin and death passed on all. Doubtless he begat both Cain and Abel in his own likeness, as well as Seth. But it is not recorded of Abel, because he left no issue behind him, and his falling the first sacrifice to death in the world, was a sufficient document of it: nor of Cain, to whom it might have been thought peculiar, because of his monstrous wickedness; and besides, his posterity was drowned in the flood: but it is recorded of Seth, because he was the father of the holy seed; and from him all mankind since the flood have descended, and fallen Adam's own likeness with them.

2: It appears from that text of Scripture (Job 14:4), 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.' Our first parents were unclean, how then can we be clean? How could our immediate parents be clean? how can our children be so? The uncleanness here referred to, is a sinful uncleanness; for it is such as makes man's days full of trouble: and it is natural, being derived from unclean parents: 'Man is born of a woman' (Job 14:1), 'And how can he be clean, that is born of a woman?' (Job 25:4). The omnipotent God, whose power is not here challenged, could bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and did so in the case of the man Christ: but no other can. Every person that is born according to the course of nature is born unclean. If the root be corrupt, so must the branches be. Neither is the matter mended, though the parents be sanctified ones; for they are but holy in part, and that by grace, not by nature, and they beget their children as men, not as holy men. Wherefore, as the circumcised parent begets an uncircumcised child, and after the purest grain is sown, we reap chaff with the corn; so the holiest parents beget unholy children, and cannot communicate their grace to them, as they do their nature; which many godly parents find true, in their sad experience.

3: Consider the confession of the psalmist David (Psalms 51:5), ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.’ Here he ascends from his actual sin, to the fountain of it, namely, corrupt nature. He was a man according to God’s own heart, but from the beginning it was not so with him. He was begotten in lawful marriage: but when the lump was shapen in the womb, it was a sinful lump. Hence the corruption of nature is called the ‘old man;’ being as old as ourselves, older than grace, even in those that are sanctified from the womb.

3: Hear our Lord’s determination of the point (John 3:6), ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh.’ Behold the universal corruption of mankind — all are flesh! Not that all are frail, though that is a sad truth too: yea, and our natural frailty is an evidence of our natural corruption, but that is not the sense of the text. The meaning of it is — all are corrupt and sinful, and that naturally. Hence our Lord argues that because they are flesh, therefore they must be born again, or else they cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). And as the corruption of our nature shows the absolute necessity of regeneration, so the absolute necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature; for why should a man need a second birth, if his nature were not quite marred in his first birth?

5: Man certainly is sunk very low now, in comparison of what he once was. God made him but a ‘little lower than the angels:’ but now we find him likened to the beasts that perish. He hearkened to a brute, and is now become like one of them. Like Nebuchadnezzar, his portion in his natural state is with the beasts, ‘minding only earthly things’ (Php 3:19). Nay, brutes, in some sort, have the advantage of the natural man, who is sunk a degree below them. He is more negligent of what concerns him most, than the stork, or the turtle, or the crane, or the swallow, in what is for their interest (Jeremiah 8:7). He is more stupid than the ox or ass (Isaiah 1:3). I find him sent to school to learn of the ant, which has no guide or leader to go before her; no overseer or officer to compel or stir her up to work; no ruler, but may do as she lists, being under the dominion of none; yet ‘provideth her meat in the summer and harvest’ (Proverbs 6:6-8); while the natural man has all these, and yet exposes himself to eternal starving. Nay, more than all this, the Scriptures hold out the natural man, not only as wanting the good qualities of these creatures, but as a compound of the evil qualities of the worst of the creatures; in whom the fierceness of the lion, the craft of the fox, the unteachableness of the wild ass, the filthiness of the dog and swine, the poison of the asp, and such like, meet. Truth itself calls them ‘serpents, a generation of vipers;’ yea, more, even ‘children of the devil’ (Matthew 23:33; John 8:44). Surely, then, man’s nature is miserably corrupted.

6: ‘We are by nature the children of wrath’ (Ephesians 2:3). We are worthy of, and liable to, the wrath of God; and this by nature: therefore, doubtless, we are by nature sinful creatures. We are condemned before we have done good or evil; under the curse, before we know what it is. But, ‘will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey?’ (Amos 3:4); that is, will the holy and just God roar in His wrath against man, if he be not, by his sin, made a prey for His wrath? No, He will not; He cannot. Let us conclude then, that, according to the Word of God, man’s nature is a corrupt nature.

If we consult experience, and observe the case of the world, in those things that are obvious to any person who will not shut his eyes against clear light, we shall quickly perceive such fruits as discover this root of bitterness. I shall propose a few things that may serve to convince us in this

point:

1: Who sees not a flood of miseries overflowing the world? Whither can a man go where he shall not dip his foot, if he go not over head and ears, in it? Every one at home and abroad, in city and country, in palaces and cottages, is groaning under some one thing or other, distasteful to him. Some are oppressed with poverty, some chastened with sickness and pain, some are lamenting their losses, every one has a cross of one sort or another. No man's condition is so soft, but there is some thorn of uneasiness in it. At length death, the wages of sin, comes after these its harbingers, and sweeps all away. Now, what but sin has opened the sluice of sorrow? There is not a complaint nor sigh heard in the world, nor a tear that falls from our eye, but it is an evidence that man is fallen as a star from heaven; for 'God distributeth sorrows in his anger' (Job 21:17). This is a plain proof of the corruption of nature: forasmuch as those who have not yet actually sinned, have their share of these sorrows; yea, and draw their first breath in the world weeping, as if they knew this world at first sight to be a Bochim, the place of weepers. There are graves of the smallest, as well as of the largest size, in the churchyard; and there are never wanting some in the world, who are, like Rachel, weeping for their children because they are not (Matthew 2:18).

2: Observe how early this corruption of nature begins to appear in young ones. Solomon observes, that 'even a child is known by his doings' (Proverbs 20:11). It may soon be discerned what way the bias of the heart lies. Do not the children of fallen Adam, before they can go alone, follow their father's footsteps? What a vast deal of little pride, ambition, sinful curiosity, vanity, wilfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them? And when they creep out of infancy, there is a necessity of using the rod of correction, to drive away the foolishness that is bound in their hearts (Proverbs 22:15), which shows that, if grace prevail not, the child will be as Ishmael — 'a wild ass-man,' as the word is (Genesis 16:12).

3: Take a view of the manifold gross outbreakings of sin in the world: the wickedness of man is yet great in the earth. Behold the bitter fruits of the corruption of our nature (Hosea 4:2). 'By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out (like the breaking forth of waters), and blood toucheth blood.' The world is filled with filthiness, and all manner of lewdness, wickedness, and profanity. From whence comes the deluge of sin on the earth, but from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, the heart of man? out of which proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, &c. (Mark 7:21-22). You will, it may be, thank God with a whole heart, that you are not like these other men; and indeed you have more reason for it than, I fear, you are aware of; for 'as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man' (Proverbs 27:19). As, looking into clear water, you see your own face; so, looking into your heart, you may see other men's there; and, looking into other men's, in them you may see your own. So that the most vile and profane wretches that are in the world, should serve you for a looking-glass, in which you ought to discern the corruption of your own nature: and if you were to do so, you would, with a heart truly touched, thank God, and not yourselves, indeed, that you are not as other men in your lives; seeing the corruption of nature is the same in you as in them.

4: Cast your eye upon those terrible convulsions which the world is thrown into by the lusts of men! Lions make not a prey of lions, nor wolves of wolves: but men are turned lions and wolves to one another, biting and devouring one another. Upon how slight occasions will men sheath their

swords in one another! The world is a wilderness, where the clearest fire that men can carry about with them will not frighten away the wild beasts that inhabit it (and that because they are men and not brutes); but one way or other they will be wounded. Since Cain shed the blood of Abel, the earth has been turned into a slaughter-house; and the chase has been continued since Nimrod began his hunting; on the earth, as in the sea, the greater still devouring the lesser. When we see the world in such a ferment, every one attacking another with words or swords, we may conclude there is an evil spirit among them. These violent heats among Adam's sons show the whole body to be distempered, the whole head to be sick, and the whole heart to be faint. They surely proceed from an inward cause (James 4:1), 'lusts that war in our members.'

5: Consider the necessity of human laws, guarded by terrors and seventies; to which we may apply what the apostle says (1 Timothy 1:9), that 'the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners.' Man was made for society; and God Himself said of the first man, when He had created him, that it was 'not meet he should be alone;' yet the case is such now, that, in society, he must be hedged in with thorns. And that from hence we may the better see the corruption of man's nature, let us consider: 1. Every man naturally loves to be at full liberty himself; to have his own will for his law; and, if he were to follow his natural inclinations, he would vote himself out of the reach of all laws, divine and human. Hence some, the power of whose hands has been answerable to their natural inclination, have indeed made themselves absolute, and above laws; agreeably to man's monstrous design at first, to be as gods (Genesis 3:5). 2. There is no man that would willingly adventure to live in a lawless society: therefore even pirates and robbers have laws among themselves, though the whole society casts off all respect to law and right. Thus men discover themselves to be conscious of the corruption of nature; not daring to trust one another, but upon security. 3. How dangerous soever it is to break through the hedge, yet the violence of lust makes many daily adventure to run the risk. They will not only sacrifice their credit and conscience, which last is lightly esteemed in the world; but for the pleasure of a few moments, immediately succeeded with terror from within, they will lay themselves open to a violent death by the laws of the land wherein they live. 4. The laws are often made to yield to men's lusts. Sometimes whole societies run into such extravagances, that, like a company of prisoners, they break off their fetters, and put their guard to flight; and the voice of laws cannot be heard for the noise of arms. And seldom is there a time, wherein there are not some persons so great and daring, that the laws dare not look their impetuous lusts in the face; which made David say, in the case of Joab, who had murdered Abner, 'These men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me' (2 Samuel 3:39). Lusts sometimes grow too strong for laws, so that the law becomes slack, as the pulse of a dying man (Habakkuk 1:3-4). 5. Consider what necessity often appears of amending old laws, and making new ones; which have their rise from new crimes, of which man's nature is very fruitful. There would be no need of mending the hedge, if men were not, like unruly beasts, still breaking it down. It is astonishing to see what a figure the Israelites, who were separated unto God from among all the nations of the earth, make in their history; what horrible confusions were among them, when there was no king in Israel, as you may see from the eighteenth to the twenty-first chapter of Judges: how hard it was to reform them, when they had the best of magistrates! and how quickly they turned aside again, when they got wicked rulers! I cannot but think, that one grand design of that sacred history, was to discover the corruption of man's nature, the absolute need of the Messiah, and His grace; and that we ought, in reading it, to improve it to that end. How cutting is that word which the Lord has to Samuel, concerning Saul (1

Samuel 9:17), ‘The same shall reign over’ — or, as the word is, shall restrain — ‘my people’! O the corruption of man’s nature! the awe and dread of the God of heaven restrains them not; but they must have gods on earth to do it, ‘to put them to shame’ (Judges 18:7).

6: Consider the remains of that natural corruption in the saints. Though grace has entered, yet corruption is not expelled: though they have got the new creature, yet much of the old corrupt nature remains; and these struggle together within them, as the twins in Rebekah’s womb (Galatians 5:17). They find it present with them at all times, and in all places, even in the most retired corners, If a man has a troublesome neighbour, he may remove; if he has an ill servant, he may put him away at the term; if a bad yoke-fellow, he may sometimes leave the house, and be free from molestation that way: but should the saint go into a wilderness, or set up his tent on some remote rock in the sea, where never foot of man, beast, or fowl had touched, there will it be with him. Should he be with Paul, caught up to the third heaven, it will come back with him (2 Corinthians 12:7). It follows him as the shadow does the body; it makes a blot in the fairest line he can draw. It is like the fig-tree on the wall, which however closely it was cut, yet still grew, till the wall was thrown down: for the roots of it are fixed in the heart, while the saint is in the world, as with bands of iron and brass. It is especially active when he would do good (Romans 7:21), then the fowls come down upon the carcases. Hence often, in holy duties, the spirit of a saint, as it were, evaporates; and he is left before he is aware, like Michal, with an image in the bed instead of a husband. I need not stand to prove to the godly the corruption of nature in them, for they groan under it; and to prove it to them, were to hold out a candle to let them see the sun: as for the wicked, they are ready to account mole-hills in the saints as big as mountains, if not to reckon them all hypocrites. But consider these few things on this head: 1. ‘If it be thus in the green tree how must it be in the dry?’ The saints are not born saints, but made so by the power of regenerating grace. Have they got a new nature, and yet the old remains with them? How great must that corruption be in others, in whom there is no grace! 2. The saints groan under it, as a heavy burden. Hear the apostle (Romans 7:24), ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ What though the carnal man lives at ease and quiet, and the corruption of nature is not his burden, is he therefore free from it? No, no; it is because he is dead, that he feels not the sinking weight. Many a groan is heard from a sick bed, but never any from a grave. In the saint, as in the sick man, there is a mighty struggle; life and death striving for the mastery: but in the natural man, as in the dead corpse, there is no noise, because death bears full sway. 3. The godly man resists the old corrupt nature; he strives to mortify it, yet it remains; he endeavours to starve it, and by that means to weaken it, yet it is active. How must it spread then, and strengthen itself in that soul, where it is not starved, but fed ! And this is the case of all the unregenerate, who make ‘provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ If the garden of the diligent afford him new work daily, in cutting off and rooting up, surely that of the sluggard must needs be ‘all grown over with thorns.’

7: I shall add but one observation more, and that is, that in every man, naturally, the image of fallen Adam appears. Some children, by the features and lineaments of their face, do, as it were, father themselves: and thus we resemble our first parents. Every one of us bears the image and impression of the fall upon him: and to evince the truth of this, I appeal to the consciences of all, in these following particulars:

1: Is not sinful curiosity natural to us? and is not this a print of Adam's image? (Genesis 3:6). Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things, than to practise old known truths? How much like old Adam do we look in this eagerness for novelties, and disrelish of old solid doctrines? We seek after knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened and spurred on.

2: If the Lord, by His holy law and wise providence, puts a restraint upon us, to keep us back from any thing, does not that restraint whet the edge of our natural inclinations, and make us so much the keener in our desires? And in this do we not betray it plainly, that we are Adam's children? (Genesis 3:2-6). I think this cannot be denied, for daily observation evinces, that it is a natural principle, that 'stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant' (Proverbs 9:17). The very heathens were convinced that man was possessed with this spirit of contradiction, though they knew not the spring of it. How often do men let themselves loose in those things, in which, had God left them at liberty, they would have bound up themselves! but corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge. And is it not a repeating of our father's folly, that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit, than gather what is shaken off the tree of good providence to them, when they have God's express allowance for it?

3: Which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to hear the instruction that causeth to err? And was not this the rock our first parents split upon? (Genesis 3:4-6). How apt is weak man, ever since that time, to parley with temptations! 'God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not' (Job 33:14), but he readily listens to Satan. Men might often come fair off, if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence, when first they appear; if they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away, but, alas! though we see the train laid for us, and the fire put to it, yet we stand till it runs along, and we are blown up with its force.

4: Do not the eyes in our head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents? (Genesis 3:6). Man is never more blind than when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasing to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were opened to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls; at which impure imaginations and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case (Joshua 7:21). Holy Job was aware of this danger from these two little rolling bodies, which a very small splinter of wood can make useless; so that, with the king who durst not, with his ten thousand, meet him that came with twenty thousand against him (Luke 14:31-32), he sendeth and desireth conditions of peace, 'I made a covenant with mine eyes' (Job 31:1).

5: Is it not natural to us to care for the body, even at the expense of the soul? This was one ingredient in the sin of our first parents (Genesis 3:6). O how happy might we be, if we were but at half the pains about our souls, that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, 'What must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30), ran but near as often through our minds as these questions do, 'What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?' (Mart 6.31), then many a hopeless case would become very hopeful. But the truth is, most men live as if they were nothing but a lump of flesh: or as if their soul served for no other use, but, like salt, to keep their body from corrupting. 'They are flesh' (John 3:6); 'they mind the things of the flesh' (Romans 8:5); 'and they

live after the flesh' (Romans 8:13 If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for: yea, the body is often served, when the conscience has entered a protest against it.

6: Is not every one by nature discontented with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it? This also was Adam's case (Genesis 3:5-6). Some one thing is always wanting; so that man is a creature given to changes. If any doubt this, let them look over all their enjoyments; and, after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for want of something; though perhaps, if they considered the matter aright, they would see that it is better for them to want than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes, on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease which Solomon calls, 'The wandering of the desire,' or, as the word is, 'The walking of the soul' (Ecclesiastes 6:9). This is a sort of diabolical trance, wherein the soul traverses the world; feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings; snatches at this and the other created excellency, in imagination and desire; goes here, and there, and every where, except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, till conquering grace brings it back to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ: but till this be, if man were set again in paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yea, and leaping over the hedge a second time.

7: Are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil counsels and examples, than by those that are good! You will see this was the ruin of Adam (Genesis 3:6). Evil example, to this day, is one of Satan's master-devices to ruin men. Though we have, by nature, more of the fox than of the lamb; yet that ill property which some observe in this creature, namely, that if one lamb skip into a water, the rest that are near will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of men; to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others in it before them. Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream, to carry us over plain duty, but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to; our affection, in that case, blinds our judgment; and what we should abhor in others, is complied with, to humour them. Nothing is more plain, than that generally men choose rather to do what the most do, than what the best do.

8: Who of all Adam's sons needs be taught the art of sewing fig-leaves together, to cover their nakedness? (Genesis 3:7). When we have ruined ourselves, and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves by ourselves: many poor contrivances are employed, as silly and insignificant as Adam's fig-leaves. What pains are men at, to cover their sin from their own conscience, and to draw all the fair colours upon it that they can! And when once convictions are fastened upon them, so that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to cover it by self-deceit, as for fish to swim in water, or birds to fly in the air. Therefore the first question of the convinced is, 'What shall we do?' (Acts 2:37). How shall we qualify ourselves? What shall we perform? Not considering that the new creature is God's own workmanship or deed (Ephesians 2:10), any more than Adam considered and thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices (Genesis 3:21).

9: Do not Adam's children naturally follow his footsteps, in biding themselves from the presence of the Lord? (Genesis 3:8). We are quite as blind in this matter as he was, who thought to hide

himself from the presence of God amongst the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin, than in one that is openly committed. ‘The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me’ (Job 24:15). Men will freely do that in secret, which they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child; as if darkness could hide from the all-seeing God. Are we not naturally careless of communion with God; aye, and averse to it? Never was there any communion between God and Adam’s children, where the Lord Himself had not the first word. If He were to let them alone they would never inquire after Him; ‘I hid me’ (Isaiah 57:17). Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it: ‘He went on in the way of his heart.’

10: How loth are men to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves? Was it not thus in the case before us? (Genesis 3:10). Adam confesses his nakedness, which could not be denied; but says not one word of his sin: the reason of it was, he would fain have hid it if he could. It is as natural for us to hide sin, as to commit it. Many sad instances thereof we have in this world, but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which ‘God will judge the secrets of men’ (Romans 2:16). Many a foul mouth will then be seen which is now ‘wiped, and saith, I have done no wickedness’ (Proverbs 30:20).

II: Is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin, and transfer the guilt upon others? When God examined our guilty first parents, did not Adam lay the blame on the woman? and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? (Genesis 3:12-13). Now Adam’s children need not be taught this hellish policy; for before they can well speak, if they cannot get the fact denied, they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault, and lay the blame upon another. Nay, so natural is this to men, that in the greatest sins, they will lay the fault upon God Himself; they will blaspheme His holy providence under the mistaken name of misfortune or ill luck, and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven’s door. And was not this one of Adam’s tricks after his fall? ‘And the man said, The woman whom thou gayest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat’ (Genesis 3:12). Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place, and then comes his confession: his apology is long, but his confession very short; it is all comprehended in one word, ‘and I did eat.’ How pointed and distinct is his apology, as if he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken! ‘The woman,’ says he, or ‘that woman’, as if he would have pointed the Judge to His own works, of which we read (Genesis 2:22). There was but one woman then in the world, so that one would think he needed not to have been so nice and exact in pointing at her: yet she is as carefully marked out in his defence, as if there had been ten thousand. ‘The woman whom thou gayest me:’ here he speaks, as if he had been ruined with God’s gift. And, to make the gift look the blacker, it is added to all this, ‘thou gayest to be with me,’ as my constant companion, to stand by me as a helper. This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord, in giving him this gift. And, after all, there is a new demonstrative here, before the sentence is complete; he says not, ‘The woman gave me,’ but ‘the woman, she gave me,’ emphatically; as if he had said, she, even she, gave me of the tree. This much for his apology. But his confession is quickly over, in one word, as he spoke it, ‘and I did eat.’ There is nothing here to point out himself and as little to show what he had eaten. How natural is this black art to Adam’s posterity! he that runs may read it. So universally does Solomon’s observation hold true (Proverbs 19:3), ‘The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.’ Let us then call fallen Adam, father; let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image. To shut up this point,

sufficiently confirmed by concurring evidence from the Lord's Word, our own experience, and observation; let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature; and look to the second Adam, the blessed Jesus, for the application of His precious blood, to remove the guilt of our sin; and for the efficacy of His Holy Spirit, to make us new creatures; knowing that 'except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

1: I proceed to inquire into the corruption of nature in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it? who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth? 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' (Jeremiah 17:9). However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in his natural state is altogether corrupt: both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large (Romans 3:10-18). As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof; and is to be found in the understanding, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory.

Author

Born into relative obscurity in 1676 in Duns, Berwickshire, Thomas Boston died in 1732 in the small parish of Ettrick in the Scottish Borders. But his 56 years of life, 45 of them spent in conscious Christian discipleship, lend credibility to the spiritual principle that it is not where, a Christian serves, but what quality of service he renders, that really counts.

It is as a loving, faithful, rigorously self-disciplined Christian pastor, and one deeply committed to the grace of God, that Boston is best remembered. Leaving his first charge at Simprin (where he served 1699-1707), he settled in Ettrick for a 25-year ministry that saw the number of communicants rise from 60 (in 1710) to 777 (in 1731). There he constantly taught them in season and out of season, in pulpit and in home.

07.01. The Corruption of the Understanding

I: The Corruption of the Understanding The understanding, that leading faculty, is despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes. ‘There is none that understandeth’ (Romans 3:11). ‘Mind and conscience are defiled’ (Titus 1:15). The natural man’s apprehension of divine things is corrupt. (Psalms 50:21), ‘Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.’ His judgment is corrupt, and cannot be otherwise, seeing his eye is evil: therefore the Scriptures, to show that man did all wrong, says, ‘every one did that which was right in his own eyes’ (Judges 17:6; and Judges 21:25). And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be cast down by the power of the Word, being of a piece with his judgment (2 Corinthians 10:5). But, to point out this corruption of the mind or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered:

1: There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines concerning every one that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, ‘That he is blind, and cannot see afar off’ (2 Peter 1:9). Hence the Spirit of God in the Scriptures clothes, as it were, divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children, using similitudes (Hosea 12:10). This, though it does not cure, yet it proves this natural weakness in the minds of men. But there are not wanting plain proofs of it from experience. As, 1. How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them? There must be ‘precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line’ (Isaiah 28:10). Try the same persons in other things, they will be found ‘wiser in their generation than the children of light.’ They understand their work and business in the world as well as their neighbours; though they are very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God. Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things; though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ. 2. Consider those who have many advantages beyond the generality of mankind; who have had the benefits of good education and instruction; yea, and are blessed with the light of grace in that measure wherein it is distributed to the saints on earth; yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion still remain in their minds! How often are they perplexed even as to practical truths, and speak as children in these things! It is a pitiful weakness that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us; and it must needs be a sinful weakness, since the law of God requires us to know and believe them. 3. What dangerous mistakes are to be found amongst men, in concerns of the greatest weight! What woeful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those, who in other things are the wisest of men, the most notorious fools with respect to their souls’ interest? (Matthew 11:25), ‘Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.’ Many that are eagle-eyed in the trifles of time, are like owls and bats in the light of life. Nay, truly, the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion, out of which he never awakes, till either, by a new light darted from heaven into his soul, he come to himself (Luke

15:17), or, ‘in hell he lift up his eyes’ (Luke 16:23). Therefore, in Scripture account, be he never so wise, he is a fool, and a simple one.

2: Man’s understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things. Man, at the instigation of the devil, attempting to break out a new light in his mind (Genesis 3:5), instead of that, broke up the doors of the bottomless pit, so as, by the smoke thereof, he was buried in darkness. When God first made man, his mind was a lamp of light, but now, when He comes to make him over again, in regeneration, He finds it darkness; ‘Ye were sometimes darkness’ (Ephesians 5:8). Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is your case, whoever you are, who are not born again. That you may be convinced in this matter, take the following proofs of it:

Proof 1: The darkness that was upon the face of the world, before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the Sun of Righteousness upon the earth. When Adam by his sin had lost that primitive light with which he was endued at his creation, it pleased God to make a glorious revelation of His mind and will to him, as to the way of salvation (Genesis 3:15). This was handed down by him, and other godly fathers, before the flood: yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation, as to carry off all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in Noah’s family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of the mind prevailed again, and the light decayed, till it died away among the generality of mankind, and was preserved only among the posterity of Shem. And even with them it had nearly set, when God called Abraham from serving other gods (Joshua 24:15). God gives Abraham a more full and clear revelation, which he communicates to his family (Genesis 18:19); yet the natural darkness wears it out at length, save that it was preserved among the posterity of Jacob. They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness so prevailed, as to leave them very little sense of true religion; and there was a necessity for a new revelation to be made to them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that, now and then, during the time from Moses to Christ. When Christ came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, and the true light with them, were within an enclosure (Psalms 147:19-20). Between them and the Gentile world, there was a partition wall of God’s making, namely, the ceremonial law: and upon that was reared up another of man’s own making, namely, a rooted enmity betwixt the parties (Ephesians 2:14-15). If we look abroad without the enclosure — and except those proselytes of the Gentiles, who by means of some rays of light breaking forth upon them from within the enclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshipped the true God, but did not conform to the Mosaical rites — we see nothing but ‘dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty’ (Psalms 74:20). Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world, and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. They were drowned in superstition and idolatry, and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number, that above thirty thousand are reckoned to have been worshipped by the men of Europe alone. Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, ‘the world by’ that ‘wisdom knew not God’ (1 Corinthians 1:21), and all their researches in religion were but groping in the dark (Acts 17:27). If we look within the enclosure, and except a few that were groaning and ‘waiting for the consolation of Israel,’ we shall see gross darkness on the face of that generation. Though ‘to them were committed the oracles of

God,' yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied; but the knowledge of those things, wherein the life of religion lies, was lost. Masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration (John 3:10). Their religion was to build on their birth-privileges, as children of Abraham (Matthew 3:9), to glory in their circumcision, and other external ordinances (Php 3:2-3), and to 'rest in the law' (Romans 2:17), after they had, by their false glosses, cut it so short, as they might outwardly go well nigh to the fulfilling of it (Matthew 5:1-48).

Thus was darkness over the face of the world, when Christ, the true light, came into it; and so is darkness over every soul, till He, as the day-star, arises in the heart. The latter is an evidence of the former. What, but the natural darkness of men's minds, could still thus wear out the light of external revelation, in a matter upon which eternal happiness depends? Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives: but how quickly they lost the knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are infinitely more weight and worth! When the teaching of patriarchs and prophets was ineffectual, it became necessary for them to be taught of God Himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding. But that it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation, there were but very few converted by Christ's preaching, who spoke as never man spoke (John 12:37-38). The great cure remained to be performed, by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles, who according to the promise (John 14:12), were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we shall find, that by applying the remedy to the soul, for the cure of bodily distempers, as in the case of 'the man sick of the palsy' (Matthew 9:2), he plainly discovered that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul. I find a miracle wrought upon one that was born blind, performed in such a way, as seems to have been designed to let the world see in it, as in glass, their case and cure (John 9:6), 'He made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.' What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds, than eyes closed up with earth? 'Shut their eyes;' shut them up by anointing or 'casting them with mortar,' as the word will bear (Isaiah 6:10). And (Isaiah 44:18), 'He hath shut their eyes:' the word properly signifies, he hath plastered their eyes; as the house in which the leprosy had been, was to be plastered (Leviticus 14:42). Thus the Lord's Word discovers the design of that strange work; and by it shows us, that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off this clay in the pool of Siloam: no other water will serve this purpose. If that pool had not represented Him, whom the Father sent into the world to open the blind eyes (Isaiah 42:7), I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of the name which, he says, signifies sent (John 9:7). So we may conclude, that the natural darkness of our minds is such as there is no cure for, but from the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eye-salve only can make us see (Revelation 3:18).

Proof 2: Every natural man's heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, how refined soever he may appear in the sight of men. 'For we ourselves also,' says the apostle Paul, 'were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures' (Titus 3:3); and yet, at the time which this text refers to, he was blameless, 'touching the righteousness which is in the law' (Php 3:6). This is a plain evidence that 'the eye is evil, the whole body being full of darkness' (Matthew 6:23). The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world, like so many blind men, who will neither take a guide, nor can guide themselves; and therefore are falling

over this and the other precipice, into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness, till they are pierced through with many sorrows; some sticking in the mire of sensuality; others dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit: every one stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other: all of them are running themselves upon the sword-point of justice, while they eagerly follow whither unmortified passions and affections lead them: and while some are lying along in the way, others are coming up, and falling headlong over them. Therefore, 'woe unto the (blind) world because of offences' (Matthew 18:7). Errors in judgment swarm in the world because it is 'night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.' All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness: for though Christianity hath fixed that matter in point of principle, yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment. All men agree in the desire of being happy; but, amongst the unrenewed men, concerning the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men; they being 'turned every one to his own way' (Isaiah 53:6). They are like the blind men of Sodom, about Lot's house; all were seeking to find the door; some grope one part of the wall for it, some another, but none of them could certainly say, he had found it; so the natural man may stumble on any good but the chief good. Look into your own unregenerate heart, and there you will see all turned upside down: heaven lying under, and earth at top. Look into your life, there you may see how you are playing the madman, snatching at shadows, and neglecting the substance: eagerly flying after that which is not, and slighting that which is, and will be for ever.

Proof 3: The natural man is always as a workman left without light; either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch thy heart at any time thou wilt, and thou wilt find it either weaving the spider's web, or hatching cockatrice' eggs (Isaiah 59:5), roving through the world, or digging into the pit; filled with vanity, or else with vileness; busy doing nothing, or what is worse than nothing. A sad sign of a dark mind.

Proof 4: The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things. He knows not what a God he has to do with: he is unacquainted with Christ, and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in these things. Aye, but some such can speak of them to good purpose; so might those Israelites of the temptations, signs, and miracles, which their eyes had seen (Deuteronomy 29:3); to whom nevertheless, the Lord had 'not given a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto that day' (verse 4). Many a man that bears the name of a Christian may make Pharaoh's confession of faith (Exodus 5:2), 'I know not the Lord,' neither will he let go what He commands them to part with. God is with them, as a prince in disguise among his subjects, who meets with no better treatment from them than if they were his fellows (Psalms 50:21). Do they know Christ, or see His glory, and any beauty in Him, for which He is to be desired? If they did, they would not slight Him as they do: a view of His glory would so darken all created excellence, that they would take Him for and instead of all, and gladly close with Him, as He offers Himself in the gospel (John 4:10; Psalms 9:10; Matthew 13:44-46). Do they know what sin is, who nurse the serpent in their bosom, hold fast deceit, and refuse to let it go? I own, indeed, that they may have a natural knowledge of these things, as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ, whom they saw and conversed with; but there was a spiritual glory in Him, perceived by believers only (John 1:14), and in respect of that glory, 'the world knew him not' (verse 10). The spiritual knowledge of them they cannot have; it is above the reach of the carnal mind (1 Corinthians 2:14). 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him;

neither can he know them,. for they are spiritually discerned.' He may indeed discourse of them, but in no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. He has some notions of spiritual truths, but sees not the things themselves that are wrapt up in the words of truth (1 Timothy 1:7). 'Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.' In a word, natural men fear, seek, confess, they know not what. Thus you may see man's understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things.

3: There is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil, whereby it comes to pass, that whatever difficulties it finds while occupied about things truly good, it acts with a great deal of ease in evil, as being in that case in its own element (Jeremiah 4:22). The carnal mind drives heavily on in the thoughts of good, but furiously in the thoughts of evil. While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it; but when once it has got over the hedge, it is as a bird got out of a cage, and becomes a freethinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind, and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woeful bias to evil.

Proof 1: As when a man by a violent stroke on the head loses his sight, there arises to him a kind of false light whereby he seems to see a thousand airy nothings, so man, being struck blind to all that is truly good for his eternal interest, has a light of another sort brought into his mind, his eyes are opened, knowing evil, and so are the words of the tempter verified (Genesis 3:5). The words of the prophet are plain — 'They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge' (Jeremiah 4:22). The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief; there are not any so simple as to want skill to contrive ways to gratify their lusts, and ruin their souls, though the power of every one's hand cannot reach to put their devices in execution. No one needs to be taught this black art, but, as weeds grow up of their own accord in the neglected ground, so does this wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish (James 3:15), grow up in the minds of men by virtue of the corruption of their nature. Why should we be surprised with the product of corrupt wits, their cunning devices to affront Heaven, to oppose and run down truth and holiness, and to gratify their own and other men's lusts? They row with the stream, no wonder they make great progress; their stock is within them, and increases by using it, and the works of darkness are contrived with the greater advantage, because the mind is wholly destitute of spiritual light. If this light were in them in any measure it would so far mar the work (1 John 3:9), 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;' he does it not as by art, wilfully and habitually, for 'his seed remaineth in him.' But, on the other hand, 'It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding bath wisdom' (Proverbs 10:23). 'To do witty wickedness nicely', as the words import, 'is as sport or play to a fool;' it comes off with him easily; and why, but because he is a fool, and has not wisdom, which would mar the contrivances of darkness I The more natural a thing is, the more easily it is done.

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

Proof 3: Does not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things in imagination, as if the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood, and would turn every thing into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions look into their own souls, and they will find this bias in their minds, whereof the idolatry which did of old, and still does, so much prevail in the world, is an incontestable evidence. For it plainly shews that men naturally would have a visible deity, and see what they worship, and therefore they ‘changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image’ (Romans 1:23). The reformation of these nations (blessed be the Lord for it) has banished idolatry, and images too, out of our churches; but heart-reformation only can break down mental idolatry, and banish the more subtle and refined image worship, and representations of the Deity, out of the minds of men. The world, in the time of its darkness, was never more prone to the former than the unsanctified mind is to the latter. Hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above, and all spiritual things.

Proof 4: What a difficult task is it to detain the carnal mind before the Lord! how averse is it to entertain good thoughts, and dwell in the meditation of spiritual things! If a person be driven, at any time, to think of the great concerns of his soul, it is not harder work to hold in an unruly hungry beast, than to hedge in the carnal mind, that it get not away to the vanities of the world again. When God is speaking to men by His word, or they are speaking to Him in prayer, does not the mind often leave them before the Lord, like so many ‘idols that have eyes, but see not, and ears, but hear not.’ The carcase is laid down before God, but the world gets away the heart. Though the eyes be closed, the man sees a thousand vanities; the mind, in the mean time, is like a bird got loose out of a cage, skipping from bush to bush, so that, in effect, the man never comes to himself till he is gone from the presence of the Lord. Say not, it is impossible to get the mind fixed — it is hard, indeed, but not impossible; grace from the Lord can do it (Psalms 108:1), agreeable objects will do it. A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive; the worldly man’s mind is in little hazard of wandering, when he is contriving his business, casting up his accounts, or counting his money; if he answers you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you, he was busy, his mind was fixed. Were we admitted into the presence of a king to petition for our lives, we should be in no hazard of gazing through the chamber of presence. But here lies the case; the carnal mind, employed about any spiritual good, is out of its element, and therefore cannot fix.

Proof 5: But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks like glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself (2 Peter 2:14), ‘Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.’ Their eyes cannot cease from sin (so the words are constructed), that is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast, which cannot be held in when once it has got out its head. Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on its favourite object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will are for its retreat. For then it is in its own element, and to draw it off from its impurities is like drawing a fish out of the water, or rending a limb from a man. It runs like fire set to a train of powder, that rests not till it can get no further.

Proof 6: Consider how the carnal imagination supplies the want of real objects to the corrupt heart, that it may make sinners happy, at least in the imaginary enjoyment of their lusts. Thus the corrupt heart feeds itself with imagination-sins, the unclean person is filled with speculative impurities, ‘having eyes full of adultery.’ The covetous man fills his heart with the world, though he cannot get his hands full of it; the malicious person with delight acts his revenge within his own breast; the

envious man, within his own narrow soul, beholds with satisfaction his neighbour laid low; and every lust finds the corrupt imagination a friend to it in time of need. This the heart does, not only when people are awake, but sometimes even when they are asleep, whereby it comes to pass, that those sins are acted in dreams, which their hearts pant after when they are awake. I am aware that some question the sinfulness of these things, but can it be thought they are consistent with that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam, and in Jesus Christ, and should be in every man? It is the corruption of nature, then, that makes filthy dreamers condemned (Jude 1:8). Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep; in a dream he prayed, in a dream he made the best choice; both were accepted of God (1 Kings 3:5-15). And if a man may, in his sleep, do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also, when asleep, do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this, and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, 'the law upon the heart' (Proverbs 6:20-21). 'When thou sleepest,' says he (Proverbs 6:22), 'it shall keep thee,' to wit, from sinning in thy sleep, that is, from sinful dreams: for a man's being kept from sin, not his being kept from affliction, is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart (Psalms 119:11). And thus the whole verse is to be understood, as appears from Proverbs 6:23. 'For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' Now, the law is a lamp and light, as it guides in the way of duty, and instructing reproofs from the law are the way of life, as they keep from sin; they guide not into the way of peace, but as they lead into the way of duty; nor do they keep a man out of trouble, but as they keep him from sin. Remarkable is the particular which Solomon instances, namely, the sin of uncleanness, 'to keep thee from the evil woman,' &c. (Proverbs 6:24, which is to be joined to Proverbs 6:22, enclosing Proverbs 6:23 in a parenthesis, as some versions have it). These things may suffice to convince us of the natural bias of the mind to evil.

4: There is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths, and an aversion to receive them. It is as little a friend to divine truths, as it is to holiness. The truths of natural religion, which do, as it were, force their entry into the minds of natural men, they hold prisoners in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). As for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them, which opposes their entry; and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). God has made a revelation of His mind and will to sinners, concerning the way of salvation; He has given us the doctrine of His holy Word, but do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not; 'for he that believeth not on the Son of God, believeth not God,' as is plain from 1 John 5:10. They believe not the promises of the Word; they look on them, in effect, only as fair words, for those who receive them are thereby made 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven, to draw sinners unto God, and to waft them over into the promised land, but they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the Word. As men travelling in deserts carry fire about with them, to frighten away wild beasts, so God has made His law a fiery law (Deuteronomy 33:2), surrounding it with threats of wrath: but men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves and will needs touch the fiery smoking mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart. I doubt not but most, if not all of you, who are yet in the black state of nature, will here plead, Not Guilty; but remember, the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are, that they believed Moses (John 9:28-29). But He confutes their confidence, roundly telling them (John 5:46), 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me.' If you believe the truths of God, you dare not reject, as you

do, Him who is truth itself. The very difficulty you find in assenting to this truth, discovers that unbelief which I am charging you with. Has it not proceeded so far with some at this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with impudence and impiety, openly to reject all revealed religion? Surely it is ‘out of the abundance of the heart their mouth speaketh.’ But, though you set not your mouth against the heavens, as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign, till overcoming grace brings your minds to the belief of the truth. To convince you in this point, consider these three things:

Proof 1: How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination, by the special operation of the Spirit of Christ, leading them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly lustre! How have you learned the truths of religion, which you pretend to believe? You have them merely by the benefit of external revelation, and by education; so that you are Christians, just because you were born and bred not in a Pagan, but in a Christian country. You are strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in your hearts, and so you cannot have the assurance of faith, with respect to the outward divine revelation made in the Word (1 Corinthians 2:10-12); therefore you are still unbelievers. ‘It is written in the Prophets, They shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me,’ says our Lord (John 6:45). Now, you have not come to Christ, therefore you have not been taught of God: you have not been so taught, and therefore you have not come; you believe not. Behold the revelation from which the faith, even of the fundamental principles in religion, springs (Matthew 16:16-17), ‘Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. — Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but ’my Father which is in heaven.’ If ever the Spirit of the Lord take you in hand, to work in you that faith which is of the operation of God, it may be, that as much time will be spent in razing the old foundation, as will make you find the necessity of the working of His mighty power, to enable you to believe the very foundation-principles, which now you think you make no doubt of. (Ephesians 1:19).

Proof 2: How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith, such as it was, in time of temptation and trial! See how they fall, like stars from heaven, when Antichrist prevails! (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12), ‘God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth.’ They fall into damning delusions because they never really believed the truth, though they themselves, and others too, thought they did believe it. That house is built on the sand, and that faith is but ill-founded, that cannot stand, but is quite overthrown, when the storm comes.

Proof 3: Consider the utter inconsistency of most men’s lives with the principles of religion which they profess; you may as soon bring east and west together, as their principles and practice. Men believe that fire will burn them, and therefore they will not throw themselves into it, but the truth is, most men live as if they thought the Gospel a mere fable, and the wrath of God, revealed in His Word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness, a mere scarecrow. If you believe the doctrines of the Word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before the Lord? how is it that you are so little concerned about this weighty point, whether you be born again or not? Many live as they were born, and are likely to die as they live, and yet live in peace. Do such persons believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state? Do they believe that they are children of wrath? Do they believe that there is no salvation without regeneration, and no

regeneration but what makes a man a new creature? If you believe the promises of the Word, why do you not embrace them, and seek to enter into the promised rest? What sluggard would not dig for a hid treasure, if he really believed that he might so obtain it? Men will work and toil for a maintenance, because they believe that by so doing they shall get it, yet they will be at no tolerable pains for the eternal weight of glory! why, but because they do not believe the word of promise? (Hebrews 4:1-2). If you believe the threatenings, how is it that you live in your sins; live out of Christ, and yet hope for mercy? Do such persons believe God to be the holy and just One, who will by no means clear the guilty? No, no; none believe; none, or next to none, believe what a just God the Lord is, and how severely He punishes.

5: There is in the mind of man a natural proneness to lies and falsehood, which favours his lusts: ‘They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies’ (Psalms 58:3). We have this, with the rest of the corruption of our nature, from our first parents. God revealed the truth to them, but through the solicitation of the tempter, they first doubted, then disbelieved it, and embraced a lie instead of it. For an incontestable evidence hereof, we may see the first article of the devil’s creed, ‘ye shall not surely die’ (Genesis 3:4), which was obtruded by him on our first parents, and by them received, naturally embraced by their posterity, and held fast, till light from heaven obliges them to quit it. It spreads itself through the lives of natural men who, till their consciences are awakened, walk after their own lusts, still retaining the principle, ‘That they shall not surely die.’ And this is often improved to such perfection, that man says, in the face of the pronounced curse, ‘I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst’ (Deuteronomy 29:19). Whatever advantage the truths of God have over error, by means of education or otherwise, error has always, with the natural man, this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, ‘O that it were true!’ so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it. And this is the reason of it: the true doctrine is, ‘the doctrine that is according to godliness’ (1 Timothy 6:3), and the truth which is after godliness’ (Titus 1:1). Error is the doctrine which is according to ungodliness; for there is not an error in the mind, nor an untruth vented in the world, in matters of religion, but has an affinity with one corruption of the heart or another; according to that saying of the apostle (2 Thessalonians 2:12), ‘They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ So that truth and error, being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error, by this means, has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Wherefore, it is not strange that men reject the simplicity of Gospel truths and institutions, and greedily embrace error and external pomp in religion, seeing they are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart, and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. Hence also it is, that so many embrace atheistical principles, for none do it but in compliance with their irregular passions, none but those whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

6: Man is naturally high-minded; for when the Gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in ‘casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God’ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Lowliness of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature; but is planted by the finger of God in a renewed heart, and learned of the lowly Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself, and what is his own: for the stroke which he has got by his fall in Adam, has produced a false light, whereby mole-hills about him appear like mountains, and a thousand airy beauties present themselves to his deluded fancy. ‘Vain man would be wise,’ so he accounts himself, and so he would be accounted by others, ‘though man be born like a wild ass’s colt’ (Job

11:12). His way is right, because it is his own: for ‘every way of a man is right in his own eyes’ (Proverbs 21:2). His state is good, because he knows none better; he is alive without the law (Romans 7:9), and therefore his hope is strong, and his confidence firm. It is another tower of Babel, reared up against heaven; and it will not fall while the power of darkness can hold it up. The Word batters it, yet it stands; one while breaches are made in it, but they are quickly repaired; at another time, it is all made to shake, but still it is kept up, till either God Himself by His Spirit raises a heart-quake within the man, which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon another (2 Corinthians 10:4-5), or death batters it down, and razes the foundation of it (Luke 16:23). And as the natural man thinks highly of himself, so he thinks meanly of God, whatever he pretends (Psalms 50:21), ‘Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.’ The doctrine of the Gospel, and the mystery of Christ, are foolishness to him, and in his practice he treats them as such (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 2:14). He brings the Word and the works of God, in the government of the world, before the bar of his carnal reason, and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned (Hosea 14:9). Sometimes the ordinary restraints of Providence are taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind: and, in that case, it is like an ants’ nest, uncovered and disturbed; doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings crowd in it, and cannot be overcome by all the arguments brought against them, till a power from on high subdue the mind, and still the mutiny of the corrupt principles.

Thus much of the corruption of the understanding, which, although the half be not told, may discover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now, ‘Ichabod; for the glory is departed from it’ (1 Samuel 4:21). Consider this, you that are yet in the state of nature, and groan out your case before the Lord, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon you, lest you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom? What do your attainments in religion avail, while your understanding lies wrapt up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life? Whatever be the natural man’s gifts or attainments, we must, as in the case of the leper (Leviticus 13:44), ‘pronounce him utterly unclean, his plague is in his head.’ But that is not all, it is in his heart too; his will is corrupted, as I shall soon shew.

07.02. The Corruption of the Will

The Corruption of the Will The Will, that commanding faculty, which at first was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor, and rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man, ‘wholly a right seed;’ but now it is ‘turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine.’ It was originally placed in due subordination to the will of God, as was shewn before; but now it is wholly gone aside. However some magnify the power of free-will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline in no wise answer, and a deep insight into the corruption of nature, given by the inward operation of the Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free-will. To open up this plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered:

1: There is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man’s will is in Satan’s fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave (Ephesians 2:1). We deny him not a power to choose, pursue, and act what, as to the matter, is good; but though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing aright and well (John Christ says, ‘Without me’ that is, separate from Me, as a branch from the stock, as both the word and context will bear, ‘ye can do nothing;’ which means, nothing truly and spiritually good. His very choice and desire of spiritual things is carnal and selfish (John 6:26). ‘Ye seek me — because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.’ He not only does not come to Christ, but ‘he cannot come’ (John 6:44). And what can he do acceptable to God, who believeth not on Him whom the Father has sent? To prove this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things:

Proof 1: How often does the light so shine before men’s eyes, that they cannot but see the good which they should choose, and the evil which they should refuse; and yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than if they were arrested by some invisible hand! They see what is right, yet they follow, and cannot but follow, what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too, yet their will cannot be brought up to it: their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it, so that they sigh and go backward, not-withstanding their light. If it be not thus, how is it that the Word and way of holiness meet with such entertainment in the world? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety and a holy life, which seem to have weight even with the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side? Although the existence of a heaven and a hell were only probable, it were sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable of being determined thereto by mere reason: but men, ‘knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them’ (Romans 1:32). And how is it that those who magnify the power of free-will, do not confirm their opinion before the world, by an ocular demonstration in a practice as far above others in holiness, as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please; and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment, and leap out of Delilah’s lap into Abraham’s bosom? Whatever use some make of that principle, it does of itself,

and in its own nature, cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life. It may be observed, that the generality of the hearers of the Gospel, of all denominations, are plagued with it, for it is a root of bitterness, natural to all men, from whence spring so much fearlessness about the soul's eternal state, so many delays and excuses in that weighty matter, whereby much work is laid up for a deathbed by some, while others are ruined by a legal walk, and neglect the life of faith, and the making use of Christ for sanctification; all flowing from the persuasion of sufficient natural abilities. So agreeable is it to corrupt nature.

Proof 2: Let those, who, by the power of the spirit of bondage, have had the law opened before them in its spirituality, for their conviction, speak and tell, if they found themselves able to incline their hearts toward it, in that case; nay, whether the more that light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more unable to comply with it. There are some who have been brought unto 'the place of the breaking forth,' who are yet in the devil's camp, who from their experience can tell, that light let into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith; and could give their testimony here, if they would. But take Paul's testimony concerning it, who, in his unconverted state, was far from believing his utter inability for good, but learned it by experience (Romans 7:8-13). I own, the natural man may have a kind of love to the letter of the law: but here lies the stress of the matter, he looks on the holy law in a carnal dress, and so, while he embraces the creature of his own fancy, he thinks that he has the law; but in very deed he is without the law, for as yet he sees it not in its spirituality. If he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fail in with, till changed by the power of grace.

2: There is in the unrenewed will an aversion to good. Sin is the natural man's element; he is as unwilling to part with it as fish are to come out of the water on to dry land. He not only cannot come to Christ, but he will not come (John 5:40). He is polluted, and hates to be washed (Jeremiah 13:27), 'Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' He is sick, yet utterly averse to the remedy; he loves his disease so, that he loathes the Physician. He is a captive, a prisoner, and a slave, but he loves his conqueror, his jailor, and master: he is fond of his fetters, prison, and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For proof of the aversion to good in the will of man, I will instance in some particulars:

Proof 1: The untowardness of children. Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in! How averse to restraint! The world can bear witness, that they are 'as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke:' and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke, than to bring young children under discipline, and make them tamely submit to be restrained in sinful liberty. Everybody may see in this, as in a glass, that man' is naturally wild and wilful, according to Zophar's observation (Job 11:12), that 'man is born like a wild ass's colt.' What can be said more? He is like a colt, the colt of an ass, the colt of a wild ass. Compare (Jeremiah 2:24), 'A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?'

Proof 2: What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to religious duties! and what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them! It is a pain to it, to leave the world but a little to come before God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things, to spend it upon the one thing needful. Men often go to God in duties, with their faces towards the world; and when their bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill 'going after

their covetousness' (Ezekiel 33:31). They are soon wearied of well-doing, for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company, or let them be enjoying a lust, time seems to them to fly, and drive furiously, so that it is gone before they are aware. But how heavily does it pass, while a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath lasts! The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week with many; therefore they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do; that the day may be made of a tolerable length: for their hearts say within them, 'When will the Sabbath be gone?' (Amos 8:5). The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day: hence, when duty is over, they are like men eased of a burden, and when sermon is ended, many have neither the grace nor the good manners to stay till the blessing is pronounced, but, like the beasts, their head is away, so soon as a man puts his hand to loose them; and why? because, while they are at ordinances, they are, as Doeg, 'detained before the Lord' (1 Samuel 22:7).

Proof 3: Consider how the will of the natural man rebels against the light (Job 24:13). Light sometimes enters in, because he is not able to keep it out: but he loves darkness rather than light. Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up; but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted. Then lusts rise against light: corruption and conscience encounter, and fight as in the field of battle, till corruption getting the upper hand, conscience is forced to turn its back; convictions are murdered, and truth is made and held prisoner, so that it can create no more disturbance. While the Word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in upon him, and his spirit is wounded in greater or lesser measure: but these convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrows sticking in his conscience, and at length, one way or other, gets them out, and makes himself whole again. Thus, while the light shines, men, naturally averse to it, wilfully shut their eyes, till God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they become proof against His Word and providences too. So, go where they will, they can sit at ease; there is never a word from heaven to them, that goes deeper than their ears. (Hosea 4:17), 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.'

Proof 4: Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, to bring them from 'the power of Satan unto God.' Zion's King gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, 'in the day of his power' (Psalms 110:2-3). None come to Him, but such as are drawn by a divine Hand (John 6:44). When the Lord comes to the soul, He finds the strong man keeping the house, and a deep peace and security there, while the soul is fast asleep in the devil's arms. But 'the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered.' Therefore the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his breast. Now, he is at no small pains to put a fair face on a black heart, to shake off his fears, to make head against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of his soul's case. If he cannot so hid himself from them, carnal reason is called in to help, and urges, that there is no ground for such great fear; all may be well enough yet; and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many. When the sinner is beat from this, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company, he resolves to leave his sins, but cannot think of breaking off so soon; there is time enough, and he will do it afterwards. Conscience says, 'To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts:' but he cries, 'To-morrow, Lord; to-morrow, Lord;' and 'just now, Lord;' till that now is never like to come. Thus, many times he comes from his prayers and confessions, with nothing but a breast full of sharper convictions; for the heart does

not always cast up the sweet morsel as soon as confession is made with the mouth (Judges 10:10-16). And when conscience obliges him to part with some lusts, others are kept as right eyes and right hands, and there are rueful looks after those that are put away; as it was with the Israelites, who with bitter hearts remembered ‘the fish they did eat in Egypt freely’ (Numbers 11:5). Nay, when he is so pressed, that he must needs say before the Lord that he is content to part with all his idols, the heart will be giving the tongue the lie. In a word, the soul, in this case, will shift from one thing to another, like a fish with the hook in its jaws, till it can do no more, for power is come to make it yield, as ‘the wild ass in her month’ (Jeremiah 2:24).

3: There is in the will of man a natural ‘proneness to evil,’ a woeful bent towards sin. Men naturally are ‘bent to backsliding from God’ (Hosea 11:7). They hang, as the word is, towards backsliding; even as a hanging wall, whose breaking ‘cometh suddenly at an instant’. Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other. Leave the unrenewed will to itself, it will choose sin, and reject holiness. This is no more to be doubted, than that water poured on the side of a hill will run downward, and not upward; or that a flame will ascend, and not descend.

Proof 1: Is not the way of evil the first way which the children of men go? Do not their inclinations plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no cunning to hide them? In the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look asquint, hell-ward, not heaven-ward. As soon as it appears that we are rational creatures, it appears that we are sinful creatures (Psalms 58:3), ‘The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born.’ (Proverbs 22:15), ‘Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.’ Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven into our very nature. The knot will not unloose; it must be broken asunder by strokes. Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away; and if it be not driven far away, the heart and it will meet and knit again. Not that the rod of itself will do this: the sad experience of many parents testifies the contrary; and Solomon himself tells you (Proverbs 27:22), ‘Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him;’ it is so bound in his heart. But the rod is an ordinance of God, appointed for that end, which, like the Word, is made effectual, by the Spirit’s accompanying His own ordinance. This, by the way, shows that parents, in administering correction to their children, have need, first of all, to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of awful solemnity, setting about it with much dependence on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual.

Proof 2: How easily are men led aside to sin! The children who are not persuaded to good, are otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon: those whom the Word cannot draw to holiness, are ‘led by Satan at his pleasure.’ Profane Esau, that cunning man (Genesis 25:27), was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, the more easy it is; so Christ’s yoke is easy to the saints, in so far as they are partakers of the divine nature, and sin is easy to the unrenewed man. But to learn to do good is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin, because the will naturally hangs towards evil, and is averse to good. A child can cause a round thing to run, when he cannot move a square thing of the same weight; for the roundness makes it fit for motion, so that it goes with a touch. Even so, men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is as a dead weight in the way of holiness. We must seek for the reason of this from the natural set and disposition of the heart, whereby it is prone and bent to evil. Were man’s will, naturally, but in equal balance to good and evil, the one might be embraced with

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

Proof 3: Consider how men go on still in the way of sin, till they are stopped, and that by another hand than their own (Isaiah 57:17), 'I hid me, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart.' If God withdraw His restraining hand, and lay the reins on the sinner's neck, he is under no doubt what way to choose; for, observe it, the way of sin is the way of his heart, his heart naturally lies that way, it hath a natural propensity to sin. As long as God suffers them, they walk in their own way (Acts 14:16). The natural man is so fixed in his woeful choice, that there needs no more to show he is off from God's way, than to say he is upon his own.

Proof 4: Whatsoever good impressions are made on him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yea, harder than the nether-millstone, in point of receiving of them, it is otherwise unstable as water, and cannot keep them. It works against the receiving of them, and, when they are made, it works them off, and returns to its natural bias (Hosea 6:4), 'Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.' The morning cloud promises a heavy shower, but, when the sun arises, it vanishes: the sun beats upon the early dew, and it evaporates, so the husbandman's expectation is disappointed. Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction, or piercing conviction, obliges him, in some sort, to turn from his evil course: but his will not being renewed, religion is still against the grain with him, and therefore this goes off again (Psalms 78:34-37). Though a stone thrown up into the air may abide there a little while, yet its natural heaviness will bring it down again: so do unrenewed men return to their wallowing in the mire, because, though they washed themselves, yet their swinish nature was not changed. It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire, hard to make it keep alight, but it is harder than either of these to make the unrenewed will retain attained goodness, which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil.

Proof 5: Do the saints serve the Lord now, as they were wont to serve sin, in their unconverted state? Very far from it (Romans 6:20), 'When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.' Sin got all, and admitted no partner; but now, when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, there are still with them some deeds of the old man, showing that he is but dying in them; and hence their hearts often misgive them, and slip aside unto evil, 'when they would do good' (Romans 7:21). They need to watch, and keep their hearts with all diligence; and their sad experience teaches them, 'That he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool' (Proverbs 28:26). If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry?

4: There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity, in the will of man, to God Himself, and His holy will (Romans 8:7), 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The will was once God's deputy in the soul, set to command there for Him; but now it is set up against Him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural

state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it. If the fruit hanging before one's eye be but forbidden, that is sufficient to draw the heart after it. Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned that they take a pride in it, belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths; or larding their speeches with minced oaths; and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that would not excuse them. Pray, tell me: 1. What profit is there here? A thief gets something for his pains; a drunkard gets a bellyfull; but what do you get? Others serve the devil for pay; but you are volunteers, who expect no reward but your work itself, in affronting Heaven; and if you repent not, you will get your reward in full measure; when you go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there; nor will the covetous man's wealth follow him into the other world! You may drive on your old trade there, eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it. 2. What pleasure is there here, but what flows from your trampling on the holy law? Which of your senses does swearing and cursing gratify? If it gratify your ears, it can only be by the noise it makes against the heavens. Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins, that we must needs conclude, your love to them in this case is a love to them for themselves, a devilish unhired love, without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, these are monsters of men: be it so; yet, alas! the world is full of such monsters, they are to be found almost everywhere. Allow me to say, they must be admitted as the mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven (Romans 3:14), 'Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.' (Romans 3:19), 'Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.'

I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, young and old, to be proved by the testimony of Scripture, and their own consciences; namely, that whether they be professors or profane, seeing they are not born again, they are heart-enemies to God, to the Son of God, to the Spirit of God, and to the law of God. Hear this, you careless souls, that live at ease in your natural state.

(1) You are enemies to God in your mind (Colossians 1:21). You are not as yet reconciled to Him; the natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hid, and you do not perceive it. 1. You are enemies to the very being of God (Psalms 14:1), 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' The proud man wishes that none were above himself; the rebel, that there were no king; and the unrenewed man, who is a mass of pride and rebellion, that there were no God. He saith it in his heart, he wisheth it were so, though he is ashamed and afraid to speak it out. That all natural men are such fools, appears from the apostle's quoting a part of this psalm, 'that every mouth may be stopped' (Romans 3:10-19). I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks on God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart rises not against the being of his Benefactor: but his enmity will quickly appear when he looks on God as the Governor and Judge of the world, binding him, under the pain of the curse, to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death because of his sin. Listen in this case to the voice of the heart, and you will find it to be, 'No God.' 2. You are enemies to the nature of God (Job 21:14), 'They say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' Men set up to themselves an idol of their own fancy, instead of God, and then fall down and worship it. They love

Him no other way than Jacob loved Leah, while he took her for Rachel. Every natural man is an enemy to God, as He is revealed in His word. The infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true Being, is not the God whom he loves, but the God whom he loathes. In fact, men naturally are haters of God (Romans 1:30); if they could, they certainly would make Him otherwise than what He is. For, consider it is a certain truth, that whatsoever is in God, is God; therefore His attributes or perfections are not any thing really distinct from Himself. If God's attributes be not God Himself, He is a compound Being, and so not the first Being, to say which is blasphemous; for the parts compounding, are before the compound itself; but He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

Now, upon this I would, for your conviction, propose to your conscience a few queries. 1. How stand your hearts affected towards the infinite purity and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, which the tongue will not speak out. If you be not partakers of His holiness you cannot be reconciled to it. The Pagans finding that they could not be like God in holiness, made their gods like themselves in filthiness; and thereby they showed what sort of a god the natural man would have. God is holy; can an unholy creature love His unspotted holiness? Nay, it is the righteous only that can 'give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness' (Psalms 97:12). God is light; can creatures of darkness rejoice therein? Nay, 'every one that doeth evil hateth the light' (John 3:20). 'For what communion hath light with darkness?' (2 Corinthians 6:14). 2. How stand your hearts affected to the justice of God? There is not a man who is wedded to his lusts, as all the unregenerate are, but would be content, with the blood of his body, to blot that letter out of the name of God. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge? or an unjustified sinner, a just God? No, he cannot (Luke 7:47), 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' Hence, as men cannot get the doctrine of His justice blotted out of the Bible, it is such an eye-sore to them, that they strive to blot it out of their minds: they ruin themselves by presuming on His mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness, wherein they may stand before His justice; but 'say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil' (Zephaniah 1:12). 3. How stand you affected to the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol, than the all-seeing God; therefore they do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord. They no more love the all-seeing, everywhere present God, than the thief loves to have the judge witness to his evil deeds. If it could be carried by votes, God would be voted out of the world, and closed up in heaven; for the language of the carnal heart is, 'The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth' (Ezekiel 8:12). 4. How stand you affected to the truth and veracity of God? There are but few in the world who can heartily subscribe to this sentence of the apostle (Romans 3:4), 'Let God be true, but every man a liar.' Nay, truly, there are many who, in effect, hope that God will not be true to His Word. There are thousands who hear the gospel, that hope to be saved, and think all safe with them for eternity, who never had any experience of the new birth, nor do at all concern themselves in the question, Whether they are born again, or not? a question that is likely to wear out from among us at this day. Our Lord's words are plain and peremptory, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' What are such hopes, then, but real hopes that God — with profoundest reverence be it spoken — will recall His word, and that Christ will prove a false prophet? What else means the sinner, who, 'when he heareth the words of the curse, blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart?' (Deuteronomy 29:19). 5. How stand you affected to the power of God? None but new creatures will love Him for it, on a fair view thereof; though others may slavishly fear Him upon account of it. There is not a natural man, but

would contribute, to the utmost of his power, to the building of another tower of Babel, to hem it in. On these grounds I declare every unrenewed man an enemy to God.

(2) You are enemies to the Son of God. That enmity to Christ is in your hearts, which would have made you join the husbandmen who killed the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard, if ye had been beset with their temptations, and no more restrained than they were. 'Am I a dog?' you will say, that I should so treat my sweet Saviour? So did Hazael ask in another case; but when he had the temptation, he was a dog to do it. Many call Christ their dear Saviour, whose consciences can bear witness that they never derived as much sweetness from Him as from their sweet lusts, which are ten times dearer to them than their Saviour. He is no other way dear to them, than as they abuse His death and sufferings, for the peaceable enjoyment of their lusts; that they may live as they please in the world, and when they die, be kept out of hell. Alas! it is but a mistaken Christ that is sweet to you, whose souls loathe that Christ who is the 'brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person.' It is with you as it was with the carnal Jews, who delighted in Him, while they mistook His errand into the world, fancying that He would be a temporal deliverer to them (Malachi 3:1). But when He 'sat as a refiner and purifier of silver' (Malachi 3:2-3), and rejected them as reprobate silver, who thought to have had no small honour in the kingdom of the Messiah, His doctrine galled their consciences, and they had no rest till they imbrued their hands in His blood. To open your eyes in this point, which you are so averse to believe, I will lay before you the enmity of your hearts against Christ in all His offices.

First, Every unregenerate man is an enemy to Christ in His prophetical office. He is appointed of the Father the great Prophet and Teacher; but not upon the call of the world, who, in their natural state, would have unanimously voted against Him. Therefore, when He came, He was condemned as a seducer and blasphemer. For evidence of this enmity, I will instance two things.

Proof 1: Consider the entertainment which He meets with when He comes to teach souls inwardly by His Spirit. Men do what they can to stop their ears, like the deaf adder, that they may not hear His voice. They 'always resist the Holy Ghost:' 'They desire not the knowledge of His ways;' and therefore bid Him 'depart from them.' The old calumny is often raised upon Him on that occasion (John 10:20), 'He is mad, why hear ye Him?' Soul-exercise, raised by the spirit of bondage, is accounted, by many, nothing else but distraction, and melancholy fits. Men thus blaspheme the Lord's work, because they themselves are beside themselves, and cannot judge of those matters.

Proof 2: Consider the entertainment which He meets with when He comes to teach men outwardly by His Word. His written Word, the Bible, is slighted. Christ hath left it to us, as the book of our instruction, to show us what way we must steer our course, if we would go to Immanuel's land. It is a lamp to light us through a dark world, to eternal light. And He has enjoined us to search it with that diligence wherewith men dig into mines for silver and gold (John 5:39). But, ah! how is this sacred treasure profaned by many! They ridicule that holy Word, by which they must be judged at the last day. They will rather lose their souls than their jest, dressing up the conceits of their wanton wits in Scripture phrases, in which they act as mad a part, as one who would dig into a mine, to procure metal to melt, and pour down his own and his neighbour's throat. Many exhaust their spirits in reading romances, and their minds pursue them, as the flame doth the dry stubble; while they have no heart for, nor relish to, the holy Word, and therefore seldom take a Bible in their hands. What is agreeable to the vanity of their minds is pleasant and taking; but what recommends

holiness to their unholy hearts, makes their spirits dull and flat. What pleasure they find in reading a profane ballad, or storybook, to whom the Bible is entirely tasteless! Many lay by their Bibles with their Sabbath-day's clothes; and whatever use they have for their clothes, they have none for their Bibles, till the return of the Sabbath. Alas! the dust or the finery about your Bibles is a witness now, and will, at the last day, be a witness of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a Prophet. Besides all this, among those who usually read the Scripture, how few are there that read it as the word of the Lord to their souls, and keep up communion with Him in it! They do not make His statutes their counsellors, nor does their particular case send them to their Bibles. They are strangers to the solid comfort of the Scriptures. And when they are dejected, it is something else than the Word that revives them: as Ahab was cured of his sullen fit, by the obtaining of Naboth's vineyard for him.

Christ's Word preached is despised. The entertainment which most of the world, to whom it has come, have always given it, is that which is mentioned (Matthew 22:5), 'They made light of it;' and for His sake, they are despised whom He employs to preach it; whatever other face men put upon their contempt of the ministry. (John 15:20-21), 'The servant is not greater than his lord: if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My Name's sake.' That Levi was the son of the hated seems not to have been without a mystery, which the world in all ages has unriddled. But though the earthen vessels, wherein God has put the treasure, be turned, with many, into vessels wherein there is no pleasure, yet why is the treasure itself slighted? But slighted it is, and that with a witness, this day. 'Lord, who hath believed our report? To whom shall we speak?' Men can, without remorse, make to themselves silent Sabbaths, one after another. And, alas! when they come to ordinances, for the most part it is but to appear, or as the word is, to be seen before the Lord; and to tread his courts, namely, as a company of beasts would do, if they were driven into them (Isaiah 1:12), SO little reverence and awe of God appear on their spirits. Many stand like brazen walls before the Word, in whose corrupt conversation the preaching of the Word makes no breach. Nay, not a few are growing worse and worse, under 'precept upon precept;' and the result of all is, 'They go and fall backward, and are broken, and snared, and taken' (Isaiah 28:13). What tears of blood are sufficient to lament that 'the gospel of the grace of God,' is thus received in vain! Ministers are but the voice of one crying; the speaker is in heaven; and speaks to you from heaven by men: why do you 'refuse Him that speaketh?' (Hebrews 12:25). God has made our Master heir of all things, and we are sent to seek for a spouse for Him. There is none so worthy as He; none more unworthy than they to whom this match is proposed; but the prince of darkness is preferred before the Prince of Peace. A dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam's fall, more terrible than if the sun, moon, and stars had been for ever wrapt up in blackness of darkness; and there we should have eternally lain, had not this grace of the gospel, as a shining sun, appeared to dispel it (Titus 2:11). But yet we fly like night-owls from it, and, like the wild beasts, lay ourselves down in our dens. When the sun arises, we are struck blind with the light thereof, and, as creatures of darkness, love darkness rather than light. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Christ, in His prophetical office.

Secondly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in His priestly office. He is appointed of the Father a priest for ever, that, by His alone sacrifice and intercession, sinners may have peace with, and access to God. But Christ crucified is a stumblingblock and foolishness to the unrenewed part

of mankind, to whom He is preached (1 Corinthians 1:23). They are not for Him as the ‘new and living way;’ nor is He, by the voice of the world, ‘an High-priest over the house of God.’ Corrupt nature goes quite another way to work.

Proof 1: None of Adam’s children are naturally inclined to receive the blessing in borrowed robes; but would always, according to the spider’s motto, ‘owe all to themselves:’ and so climb up to heaven on a thread spun themselves. For they ‘desire to be under the law’ (Galatians 4:21), and ‘go about to establish their own righteousness’ (Romans 10:3). Man naturally looks on God as a great Master; and himself as His servant, that must work and win heaven as his wages. Hence, when conscience is awakened, he thinks that, to the end he may be saved, he must answer the demands of the law, serve God as well as he can, and pray for mercy wherein he comes short. And thus many come to duties, that never come out of them to Jesus Christ.

Proof 2: As men naturally think highly of their duties, that seem to them to be well done, so they look for acceptance with God, according as their work is done, not according to the share they have in the blood of Christ. ‘Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?’ They value themselves on their performances and attainments; yet, on their very opinions in religion (Php 3:4-7), taking to themselves what they rob from Christ the great High-priest.

Proof 3: The natural man, going to God in duties, will always be found either to go without a mediator, or with more than the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ. Nature is blind, and therefore venturesome; it sets men agoing immediately to God without Christ; to rush into His presence, and put their petitions in His hand, without being introduced by the Secretary of heaven, or putting their requests into His hand. So fixed is this disposition in the unrenewed heart, that when many hearers of the gospel are conversed with upon the point of their hopes of salvation, the name of Christ will scarcely be heard from their mouths. Ask them how they think to obtain the pardon of sin? They will tell you they beg and look for mercy, because God is a merciful God; and that is all they have to confide in. Others look for mercy for Christ’s sake: but how do they know that Christ will take their plea in hand? Why, as the papists have their mediators with the Mediator, so have they. They know He cannot but do it, for they pray, confess, mourn, and have great desires and the like, and so have something of their own to commend them to Him. They were never made poor in spirit, and brought empty-handed to Christ, to lay the stress of all on His atoning blood.

Thirdly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his kingly office. The Father has appointed the Mediator, ‘King in Zion’ (Psalms 2:6). All to whom the gospel comes are commanded, on their highest peril, ‘to kiss the Son,’ and submit themselves unto him (Psalms 2:12). But the natural voice of mankind is, ‘Away with him;’ as you may see (Psalms 2:2-3), ‘They will not have him to reign over them’ (Luke 19:14).

Proof 1: The workings of corrupt nature would wrest the government out of His hands. No sooner was He born, but, being born a King, Herod persecuted Him (Matthew 2:1-23). And when He was crucified, they ‘set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews’ (Matthew 27:37). Though His kingdom be a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world, yet they cannot allow Him a kingdom within a kingdom, which acknowledges no other head or supreme but the Royal Mediator. They make bold with His royal prerogatives, changing His laws, institutions, and ordinances, modelling His worship according to the devices of their own hearts, introducing new offices and officers into His kingdom, not to be found in ‘the book of the manner of His

kingdom;' disposing of the external government thereof, as may best suit their carnal designs. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Zion's King.

Proof 2: How unwilling are men, naturally, to submit to, and be hedged in by, the laws and discipline of His kingdom! As a king, He is a lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22), and has appointed an external government, discipline, and censures, to control the unruly, and to keep His professed subjects in order, to be exercised by officers of His own appointment (Matthew 18:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17). But these are the great eyesores of the carnal world, who love sinful liberty, and therefore cry out, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us' (Psalms 2:3). Hence this work is found to be, in a special manner, a striving against the stream of corrupt nature, which, for the most part, puts such a face on the church, as if there were no king in Israel, every one doing that which is right in his own eyes.

Proof 3: However natural men may be brought to feign submission to the King of saints, yet lusts always retain the throne and dominion in their hearts, and they are serving divers lusts and pleasures (Titus 3:3). None but those in whom Christ is formed, do really put the crown on His head, and receive the kingdom of Christ within them. His crown is 'the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals.' Who are they, whom the power of grace has not subdued, that will allow Him to set up, and to put down, in their souls, as He will? Nay, as for others, any lord shall sooner get the rule over them, than the Lord of glory: they kindly entertain His enemies, but will never absolutely resign themselves to His government, till conquered in a day of power. Thus you may see that the natural man is an enemy to Jesus Christ in all His offices. But O how hard it is to convince men in this point! They are very loath to believe. And, in a special manner, the enmity of the heart against Christ in His priestly office seems to be hid from the view of most of the hearers of the gospel. There appears to be a peculiar malignity in corrupt nature against this office of His. It may be observed, that the Socinians, those enemies of our blessed Lord, allow Him to be properly a Prophet and a King, but deny Him to be properly a Priest. And this is agreeable enough to the corruption of our nature: for, under the covenant of works, the Lord was known as a Prophet or Teacher, and also as a King or Ruler, but not at all as a Priest. So man knows nothing of the mystery of Christ, as the way to the Father, till it is revealed to him, and when it is revealed, the will rises up against it, for corrupt nature is opposed to the mystery of Christ, and the great contrivance of salvation, through the crucified Saviour, revealed in the gospel. For clearing of which weighty truth, let these four things be considered:

(1) The soul's falling in with the grand scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, and setting the matters of salvation on that footing before the Lord, is declared by the Scriptures of truth to be an undoubted mark of a real saint, who is happy here, and shall be happy hereafter (Matthew 11:6), 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' (1 Corinthians 1:23-24), 'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' (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.' Now, how could this be, if nature could comply with that grand device?

(2) Corrupt nature is the very reverse of the gospel plan. In the gospel, God proposes Jesus Christ as the great means of re-uniting man to Himself; He has named Him as the Mediator, one in whom

He is well pleased, and will have none but Him (Matthew 17:5); but nature will have none of Him (Psalms 81:11). God appointed the place of meeting for the reconciliation, namely, the flesh of Christ. Accordingly, God was in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19), as the tabernacle of meeting, to make up the peace with sinners, but natural men, although they should die for ever, will not come to Christ (John 5:40), 'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.' In the way of the gospel, the sinner must stand before the Lord in an imputed righteousness, but corrupt nature is for an inherent righteousness; and, therefore, so far as natural men follow after righteousness, they follow after 'the law of righteousness' (Romans 9:31-32), and not after 'the Lord our righteousness.' Nature is always for building up itself, and to have some ground for boasting, but the great design of the gospel is to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting (Romans 3:27). The sum of our natural religion is, to do good from and for ourselves (John 5:44); the sum of the gospel religion is, to deny ourselves, and to do good from and for Christ (Php 1:21).

(3) Every thing in nature is against believing in Jesus Christ. What beauty can the blind man discern in a crucified Saviour, for which He is to be desired? How can the will, naturally impotent, yea, and averse to good, make choice of Him? Well may the soul then say to him in the day of the spiritual siege, as the Jebusites said to David in another case, 'Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither' (2 Samuel 5:6). The way of nature is to go into one's self for all, according to the fundamental maxim of unsanctified morality, 'That a man should trust in himself;' which, according to the doctrine of faith, is mere foolishness: for so it is determined (Proverbs 28:26), 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.' Now faith is the soul's going out of itself for all: and this, nature, on the other hand, determines to be foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:8-23). Wherefore there is need of the working of mighty power to cause sinners to believe (Ephesians 1:19; Isaiah 53:1). We see the promises of welcome to sinners, in the gospel covenant, are ample, large, and free, clogged with no conditions (Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17). If they cannot believe His bare word, He has given them His oath upon it (Ezekiel 33:11); and, for their greater assurance, He has appended seals to His sworn covenant, namely, the holy sacraments: so that no more could be demanded of the most faithless person in the world, to make us believe Him, than the Lord hath condescended to give us, to make us believe Himself. This plainly speaks nature to be against believing, and those who flee to Christ for a refuge, to have need of strong consolation (Hebrews 6:18), to balance their strong doubts, and propensity to unbelief. Further, also, it may be observed, how in the Word sent to a secure, graceless generation, their objections are answered beforehand, and words of grace are heaped one upon another, as you may read (Isaiah 55:7-9; Joel 2:13). Why? Because the Lord knows, that when these secure sinners are thoroughly awakened, doubts, fears, and carnal reasonings against believing, will be getting into their breasts, as thick as dust in a house, raised by sweeping a dry floor.

(4) Corrupt nature is bent towards the way of the law, or covenant of works; and every natural man, so far as he sets himself to seek after salvation, is engaged in that way; and will not quit it, till beat from it by divine power. Now the way of salvation by works, and that of free grace in Jesus Christ, are inconsistent. (Romans 11:6), 'And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.' (Galatians 3:12), 'And the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them.' Wherefore, if the will of man naturally incline to the way of salvation by the law, it lies cross to the

gospel plan. And that such is the natural bent of our hearts will appear if these following things be considered:

First, The law was Adam's covenant; and he knew no other, as he was the head and representative of all mankind, that were brought into it with him, and left under it by him, though without strength to perform the condition thereof. Hence, this covenant is interwoven with our nature; and though we have lost our father's strength, yet we still incline to the way he was set upon, as our head and representative in that covenant; that is, by doing, to live. This is our natural religion, and the principle which men naturally take for granted (Matthew 19:16), 'What good thing shall J do, that I may have eternal life?'

Secondly, Consider the opposition that has always been made in the world against the doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ by men setting up for the way of works, thereby discovering the natural tendency of the heart. It is manifest, that the great design of the gospel plan is to exalt the free grace of God in Jesus Christ (Romans 4:16), 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.' (See Ephesians 1:6, and Ephesians 2:7-9). All Gospel truths centre in Christ: so that to learn the truth is to learn Christ (Ephesians 4:20), and to be truly taught it, is to be taught as 'the truth is in Jesus' (Ephesians 4:21). All dispensations of grace and favour from heaven, whether to nations or particular persons, have still had something about them proclaiming the freedom of grace, as in the very first separation made by the divine favour, Cain, the elder brother is rejected, and Abel, the younger, accepted. This shines through the whole history of the Bible; but, true as it is, this has been the point principally opposed by corrupt nature. One may well say that, of all errors in religion, since Christ the seed of the woman was preached, this of works, in opposition to free grace in Him, was the first that lived, and, it is likely, will be the last that dies. There have been vast numbers of errors, which have sprung up, one after another, whereof, at length, the world became ashamed and weary, so that they died away. This has continued, from Cain, the first author of this heresy, unto this day, and never wanted some that clave to it, even in the times of greatest light. I do not, without ground, call Cain the author of it; who, when Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a bloody offering of the firstlings of his flock (like the publican smiting on his breast, and saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'), advanced with his thank offering of the fruit of the ground (Genesis 4:3-4), like the proud Pharisee with his 'God, I thank thee,' &c. For what was the cause of Cain's wrath, and of his murdering Abel? was it not that he was not accepted of God for his work? (Genesis 4:4-5). 'And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous' (1 John 3:12); that is, done in faith, and accepted, when his were done without faith, and rejected, as the apostle teaches (Hebrews 11:4). So he wrote his indignation against justification and acceptance with God through faith, in opposition to works, in the blood of his brother, to convey it down to posterity. And, since that time, the unbloody sacrifice has often swimmed in the blood of those that rejected it. The promise made to Abraham, of the seed in which all nations should be blessed, was so overclouded among his posterity in Egypt, that the generality of them saw no need of that way of obtaining the blessing, till God himself confuted their error by a fiery law from Mount Sinai, which 'was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come' (Galatians 3:19). I need not insist on telling you, how Moses and the prophets had still much ado, to lead the people off from the conceit of their own righteousness. The ninth chapter of Deuteronomy is entirely spent on that purpose. They were very gross in that point in our Saviour's time. In the time of the apostles, when the doctrine of free grace was most clearly preached, that

error lifted up its head in the face of the clearest light; witness the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And since that time it has not been wanting; Popery being the common sink of former heresies, and the heart and life of that delusion. And, finally, it may be observed, that always as the church declined from her purity otherwise, the doctrine of free grace was obscured proportionably.

Thirdly, Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law, in opposition to Christ, that, as the tainted vessel turns the taste of the purest liquor put into it, so the natural man turns the very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. The ceremonial law was to the Jews a real gospel. It held blood, death, and translation of guilt before their eyes continually, as the only way of salvation; yet their very table, that is, their altar, with the several ordinances pertaining thereto (Malachi 1:12), was a snare unto them (Romans 11:9), while they used it to make up the defects in their obedience to the moral law; and clave to it so, as to reject Him, whom the altar and sacrifices pointed them to, as the substance of all; even as Hagar, whose duty was only to serve, was, by their father, brought into her mistress's bed; not without a mystery in the purpose of God, 'for these are the two covenants' (Galatians 4:24). Thus is the doctrine of the Gospel corrupted by papists, and other enemies to the doctrine of free grace. And indeed, however natural men's heads may be set right in this point, as surely as they are out of Christ, their faith, repentance, and obedience, such as they are, are placed by them in the room of Christ and His righteousness; and so trusted to, as if by these they fulfilled a new law.

Fourthly, Great is the difficulty, in Adam's sons, of their parting with the law as a covenant of works. None part with it, in that respect, but those whom the power of the Spirit of grace separates from it. The law is our first husband, and gets every one's virgin love. When Christ comes to the soul, He finds it married to the law, so as it neither can nor will be married to another, till it be obliged to part with the first husband, as the apostle teaches (Romans 7:1-4). Now, that you may see what sort of a parting this is, consider,

First, It is death (Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:19). Entreaties will not prevail with the soul here; it says to the first husband, as Ruth to Naomi, 'The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.' And here sinners are true to their word; they die to the law, before they are married to Christ. Death is hard to every body; but what difficulty, do you imagine, must a loving wife, on her deathbed, find in parting with her husband, the husband of her youth, and with the dear children she has brought forth to him? The law is that husband; all the duties performed by the natural man are these children. What a struggle, as for life, will be in the heart before they are parted? I may have occasion to touch upon this afterwards; in the mean time, take the apostle's short but pithy description of it (Romans 10:3), 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' They go about to establish their own righteousness, like an eager disputant in schools, seeking to establish the point in question; or, like a tormentor, extorting a confession from one upon the rack. They go about to establish it, to make it stand. Their righteousness is like a house built on the sand, it cannot stand, but they would have it to stand; it falls, they set it up again, but still it tumbles down on them; yet they cease not to go about to make it stand. But wherefore all this pains about a tottering righteousness? Because, such as it is, it is their own. What sets them against Christ's righteousness? Why, that would make them free grace's debtors for all; and that is what the proud heart can by no means submit to. Here lies the stress of the

matter (Psalms 10:4), ‘The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek,’ (to read it without the supplement); in other terms, it means, ‘He cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed.’ Such is the struggle before the soul dies to the law. But what speaks yet more of this woeful disposition of the heart, nature ofttimes gets the mastery of the disease: insomuch that the soul, which was like to have died to the law while convictions were sharp and piercing, fatally recovers of the happy and promising sickness, and, what is very natural, cleaves more closely than ever to the law, even as a wife brought back from the gates of death, would cleave to her husband. This is the issue of the exercises of many about their souls’ case. They are indeed brought to follow duties more closely, but they are as far from Christ as ever, if not farther.

Secondly, It is a violent death (Romans 7:4), ‘Ye are become dead to the law,’ being killed, slain, or put to death, as the word bears. The law itself has a great hand in this; the husband gives the wound (Galatians 2:19), ‘I through the law am dead to the law.’ The soul that dies this death is like a loving wife matched with a rigorous husband; she does what she can to please him, yet he is never pleased, but harrasses and beats her till she breaks her heart, and death sets her free: this will afterwards more fully appear. Thus it is made evident, that men’s hearts are naturally bent to the way of the law, and lie cross to the Gospel method: and the second article of the charge against you that are unregenerate is verified, namely, that you are enemies to the Son of God.

(3) You are enemies to the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of holiness: the natural man is unholy, and loves to be so, and therefore resists the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51). The work of the Spirit is to convince the world of ‘sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ (John 16:8). But O, how do men strive to ward off these convictions, as much as they ward off a blow threatening the loss of a right eye or a right hand! If the Spirit of the Lord dart them in, so that they cannot avoid them, the heart says, in effect, as Ahab to Elijah, whom he both hated and feared, ‘Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?’ And indeed they treat him as an enemy, doing their utmost to stifle convictions, and to murder these harbingers that come to prepare the Lord’s way into the soul. Some fill their hands with business, to put their convictions out of their heads, as Cain, who set about building a city; some put them off with delays and fair promises, as Felix did; some will sport them away in company, and some sleep them away. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification; whose work it is to subdue lusts, and burn up corruption. How then can the natural man, whose lusts are to him as his limbs, yea, as his life, fail of being an enemy to Him?

(4) You are enemies to the law of God. Though the natural man desires to be under the law, as a covenant of works, choosing that way of salvation, in opposition to the mystery of Christ; yet as it is a rule of life to him, requiring universal holiness, and forbidding all manner of impurity, he is an enemy to it; ‘is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be’ (Romans 8:7). For, 1. There is no unrenewed man, who is not wedded to some one lust or another, which his heart can by no means part with. Now that he cannot bring up his inclinations to the holy law, he would fain have the law brought down to his inclinations: a plain evidence of the enmity of the heart against it. Therefore, ‘to delight in the law of God after the inward man,’ is proposed in the Word as a mark of a gracious soul (Romans 7:22; Psalms 1:2). It is from this natural enmity of the heart against the law that all the pharisaical glosses upon it have arisen, whereby the commandment, which is in itself exceeding broad, had been made very narrow, to the intent that it might be the more agreeable to the natural disposition of the heart. 2. The law, laid home on the natural conscience in its spirituality, irritates corruption. The nearer it comes, nature rises the higher against it. In that

case it is as oil to the fire, which instead of quenching it, makes it flame the more: ‘When the commandment came, sin revived,’ says the apostle (Romans 7:9). What reason can be assigned for this, but the natural enmity of the heart against the holy law? Unmortified corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it rages. Let us conclude then, that the unregenerate are heart-enemies to God, His Son, His Spirit, and His law; that there is a natural contrariety, opposition, and enmity in the will of man to God Himself, and His holy will.

(5) There is in the will of man contumacy against the Lord. Man’s will is naturally wilful in an evil course. He will have his will, though it should ruin him; it is with him, as with the leviathan (Job 41:29), ‘Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.’ The Lord calls to him by His Word; says to him, as Paul to the jailor, when he was about to kill himself, ‘Do thyself no harm:’ sinner, ‘why will you die?’ (Ezekiel 18:31). But they will not hearken; every one turneth to his course, ‘as the horse rusheth into the battle’ (Jeremiah 8:6). We have a promise of life, in form of a command (Proverbs 4:4), ‘Keep my commandments, and live:’ it speaks impenitent sinners to be self-destroyers, wilful self-murderers. They transgress the command of living; as if one’s servant should wilfully starve himself to death, or greedily drink a cup of poison, which his master commands him to forbear: even so do they; they will not live, they will die (Proverbs 8:36), ‘All they that hate me love death.’ O what a heart is this! It is a stony heart (Ezekiel 36:26), hard and inflexible as a stone: mercies melt it not, judgments break it not; yet it will break ere it bow. It is an insensible heart. Though there be upon the sinner a weight of sin, which makes the earth to stagger; although there is a weight of that wrath on him, which makes the devils to tremble; yet he goes lightly under the burden; he feels not the weight any more than a stone would, till the Spirit of the Lord quickens him so far as to feel it.

(6) The unrenewed will is wholly perverse, in reference to man’s chief and highest end. The natural man’s chief end is not God, but himself. The being of man is merely relative, dependent, borrowed: he has neither being nor goodness originally from himself; but all he has is from his God, as the first cause and spring of all perfection, natural or moral. Dependence is woven into his very nature, so that if God were totally to withdraw from him, he would dwindle into a mere nothing. Seeing then whatever man is, he is of Him, surely in whatever he is, he should be to Him, as the waters which came from the sea do, of course, return thither again. Thus man was created, directly looking to God, as his chief end: but, falling into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself; and, like a traitor usurping the throne, he gathers in the rents of the crown to himself. This infers a total apostasy and universal corruption in man; for where the chief and last end is changed, there can be no goodness there. This is the case of all men in their natural state (Psalms 14:2-3), ‘The Lord looked down — to see if there were any that did — seek God. They are all gone aside’ from God; they seek not God, but themselves. Though many fair shreds of morality are to be found amongst them, yet ‘there is none that doth good, no, not one;’ for though some of them in appearance run well, yet they are still off the way; they never aim at the right mark. They are ‘lovers of their own selves’ (2 Timothy 3:2), ‘more than God’ (verse 4). Wherefore Jesus Christ, having come into the world to bring men back to God again, came to bring them out of themselves in the first place (Matthew 16:24). The godly groan under this woeful disposition of the heart: they acknowledge it, and set themselves against it, in its subtle and dangerous insinuations. The unregenerate, though most insensible of it, are under the power thereof, and whithersoever they turn themselves, they cannot move beyond the circle of self. They seek themselves, they act for

themselves; their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever springs they come, all run into, and meet in the dead sea of self.

Most men are so far from making God their chief end, in their natural and civil actions, that in these matters, God is not in all their thoughts. Their eating and drinking, and such like natural actions, are for themselves; their own pleasure or necessity, without any higher end (Zechariah 7:6), ‘Did ye not eat for yourselves?’ They have no eye to the glory of God in these things, as they ought to have (1 Corinthians 10:31). They do not eat and drink to keep up their bodies for the Lord’s service; they do them not because God has said, ‘Thou shalt not kill;’ neither do those drops of sweetness, which God has put into the creature, raise up their souls towards that ocean of delights that is in the Creator; though they be a sign hung out at heaven’s door, to tell men of the fulness of goodness that is in God Himself (Acts 14:17). But it is self, and not God, that is sought in them, by natural men. And what are the unrenewed man’s civil actions, such as buying, selling, working, &c., but fruit to himself? (Hosea 10:1). So marrying, and giving in marriage, are reckoned amongst the sins of the old world (Matthew 24:38): for they have no eye to God therein, to pleas

07.02a. The Corruption of the Will contd

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from hell and wrath, or their own eternal happiness, that is their chief and highest end (Matthew 19:16-22). Their eyes are held, that they see not the glory of God. They seek God indeed, yet not for Himself, but for themselves. They seek Him not at all, but for their own welfare: so their whole life is woven into one web of practical blasphemy, making God the means, and self their end; yea, their chief end.

Thus I have given you a rude draught of man's will, in his natural state, drawn by Scripture, and men's own experience. Call it no more Naomi, but Marah; for bitter it is, and a root of bitterness. Call it no more free-will, but slavish lust; free to evil, but free from good, till regenerating grace loosens the bands of wickedness. Now, since all must be wrong, and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt, I shall briefly despatch what remains, as following of necessity, on the corruption of these prime faculties of the soul.

07.03. The Corruption of the Affections

III: The Corruption of the Affections The affections are corrupted. The unrenewed man's affections are wholly disordered and distempered: they are as the unruly horse, that either will not receive, or violently runs away with, the rider. So man's heart naturally is a mother of abominations (Mark 7:21-22), 'For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness,' &c. The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on (Acts 9:5). His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven; and therefore God calls to him to turn. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor (Proverbs 2:13-15). They hit the point indeed, as Caiaphas did in another case, who cried out against the apostles, as men that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6); for that is the work which the gospel has to do in the world, where sin has put all things so out of order, that heaven lies under, and earth atop. If the unrenewed man's affections be set on lawful objects, then they are either excessive or defective. Lawful enjoyments of the world have sometimes too little, but mostly too much of them; either they get not their due, or, if they do, it is measure pressed down, and running over. Spiritual things have always too little of them. In a word, they are never right; only evil.

Now, here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, the man should not stoop; the will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not; and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defence of the corrupt will, say, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power comes, in which he is made a new creature.

IV: Corruption of the Conscience The conscience is corrupt and defiled (Titus 1:15). It is an evil eye, that fills one's conversation with much darkness and confusion, being naturally unable to do its office; and till the Lord, by letting in new light to the soul, awakens the conscience, it remains sleepy and inactive. Conscience can never do its work, but according to the light it has to work by. Wherefore, seeing the natural man cannot spiritually discern spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14), the conscience naturally is quite useless in that point; being cast into such a deep sleep, that nothing but saving illumination from the Lord can set it on work in that matter. The light of the natural conscience in good and evil, sin and duty, is very defective; therefore, though it may check for grosser sins, yet, as to the more subtle workings of sin, it cannot check them, because it discerns them not. Thus, conscience will fly in the face of many, if at any time they be drunk, swear, neglect prayer, or be guilty of any gross sin; who otherwise have a profound peace, though they live in the sin of unbelief, and are strangers to spiritual worship, and the life of faith. Natural light being but faint and languishing in many things which it reaches, conscience, in that case, shoots like a stitch in one's side, which quickly goes off: its incitements to duty, and checks for,

and struggles against sin, are very remiss, which the natural man easily gets over. But because there is a false light in the dark mind, the natural conscience following the same, will call evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). So it is often found like a blind and furious horse, which violently runs down himself, his rider, and all that comes in his way. (John 16:2), 'Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.' When the natural conscience is awakened by the Spirit of conviction, it will indeed rage and roar, and put the whole man in a dreadful consternation; awfully summon all the powers of the soul to help in a strait; make the stiff heart to tremble, and the knees to bow; set the eyes weeping, the tongue confessing; and oblige the man to cast out the goods into the sea, which he apprehends are likely to sink the ship of the soul, though the heart still goes after them. Yet it is an evil conscience which naturally leads to despair, and will do it effectually, as in Judas' case; unless either lusts prevail over it, to lull it asleep, as in the case of Felix (Acts 24:25), or the blood of Christ prevail over it, sprinkling and purging it from dead works, as in the case of all true converts (Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:22).

V: Corruption of the Memory

Even the memory bears evident marks of this corruption. What is good and worthy to be remembered, as it makes but slender impression, so that impression easily wears off; the memory, as a leaking vessel, lets it slip (Hebrews 2:1). As a sieve that is full when in the water, lets all go when it is taken out, so is the memory with respect to spiritual things. But how does it retain what ought to be forgotten? Sinful things so bear in themselves upon it, that though men would fain have got them out of mind, yet they stick there like glue. However forgetful men are in other things, it is hard to forget an injury. So the memory often furnishes new fuel to old lusts; makes men in old age react the sins of their youth, while it presents them again to the mind with delight, which thereupon returns to its former lusts. Thus it is like a riddle, that lets through the pure grain, and keeps the refuse. Thus far of the corruption of the soul.

VI: Corruption of the Body The body itself also is partaker of this corruption and defilement, so far as it is capable thereof. Wherefore the Scripture calls it sinful flesh (Romans 8:3). We may take this up in two things. 1. The natural temper, or rather distemper of the bodies of Adam's children, as it is an effect of original sin, so it has a natural tendency to sin, incites to sin, leads the soul into snares, yea, is itself a snare to the soul. The body is a furious beast, of such a temper, that if it be not beat down, kept under, and brought into subjection, it will cast the soul into much sin and misery (1 Corinthians 9:27). There is a vileness in the body (Php 3:21), which, as to the saints, will never be removed, until it be melted down in the grave, and cast into a new form at the resurrection, to come forth a spiritual body; and will never be carried off from the bodies of those who are not partakers of the resurrection to life. 2. It serves the soul in many sins. Its members are instruments or weapons of unrighteousness, whereby men fight against God (Romans 6:13). The eyes and ears are open doors, by which impure motions and sinful desires enter the soul: the tongue is 'a world of iniquity' (James 3:6), 'an unruly evil, full of deadly poison' (James 3:8): by it the impure heart vents a great deal of its filthiness. 'The throat is an open sepulchre (Romans 3:13). The feet run the devil's errands (Romans 3:15). The belly is made a god (Php 3:19), not only by drunkards and riotous livers, but by every natural man (Zechariah 7:6). So the body naturally is an agent for the devil, and a magazine of armour against the Lord. To conclude — man by nature is wholly corrupted: 'From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in him.' As in a dunghill every part contributes to the corruption of the whole, so the

natural man, while in this state, grows still worse and worse; the soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul: and every faculty of the soul serves to corrupt another more and more. Thus much for the second general head.

III. I shall show how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted. The heathens perceived that man's nature was corrupted; but how sin had entered, they could not tell. But the Scripture is very plain on that point (Romans 5:12; Romans 5:19), 'By one man sin entered into the world. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Adam's sin corrupted man's nature, and leavened the whole lump of mankind. We putrefied in Adam as our root. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed: the vine turned into the vine of Sodom, and so the grapes became grapes of gall. Adam, by his sin, became not only guilty, but corrupt; and so transmits guilt and corruption to his posterity (Genesis 5:3; Job 14:4). By his sin he stripped himself of his original righteousness, and corrupted himself; we were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works: we were in him seminally, as our natural head; hence we fell in him, and by his disobedience were made sinners, as Levi, in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes (Hebrews 7:9-10). His first sin is imputed to us; therefore we are justly left under the want of his original righteousness, which being given to him as a common person, he cast off by his sin: and this is necessarily followed, in him and us, by the corruption of the whole nature; righteousness and corruption being two contraries, one of which must needs always be in man, as a subject capable thereof. And Adam, our common father, being corrupt, we are so too; for 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?'

Although it is sufficient to prove the righteousness of this dispensation, that it was from the Lord, who doeth all things well, yet, to silence the murmurings of proud nature, let these few things further be considered. 1. In the covenant wherein Adam represented us, eternal happiness was promised to him and his posterity, upon condition of his, that is, Adam's perfect obedience, as the representative of all mankind: whereas, if there had been no covenant, they could not have pleaded eternal life upon their most perfect obedience, but might have been, after all, reduced to nothing; notwithstanding, by natural justice, they would have been liable to God's eternal wrath, in case of sin. Who in that case would not have consented to that representation? 2. Adam had a power to stand given him, being made upright. He was as capable of standing for himself and all his posterity, as any after him could be for themselves. This trial of mankind in their head would soon have been over, and the crown won for them all, had he stood: whereas, had his posterity been independent of him, and every one left to act for himself, the trial would have been continually carrying on, as men came into the world. 3. He had the strongest natural affection to engage him, being our common father. 4. His own stock was in the ship, his all lay at stake, as well as ours. He had no separate interest from ours; but if he forget ours, he must necessarily forget his own. 5. If he had stood, we should have had the light of his mind, the righteousness of his will, and holiness of his affections, with entire purity, transmitted unto us; we could not have fallen; the crown of glory, by his obedience, would have been for ever secured to him and his. This is evident from the nature of a federal representation, and no reason can be given why, seeing we are lost by Adam's sin, we should not have been saved by his obedience. On the other hand, it is reasonable, that he falling, we should with him bear the loss. 6. Those who quarrel with this dispensation, must renounce their part in Christ; for we are no otherwise made sinners by Adam, than we are made righteous by Christ, from whom we have both imputed and inherent righteousness. We no more

made choice of the second Adam for our head and representative in the second covenant, than we did of the first Adam in the first covenant.

Let none wonder that such a horrible change could be brought on by one sin of our first parents; for thereby they turned away from God, as their chief end, which necessarily infers a universal depravation. Their sin was a complication of evils, a total apostasy from God, a violation of the whole law: by it they broke all the ten commands at once. 1. They chose new gods. They made their belly their god, by their sensuality; self their god, by their ambition; yea, and the devil their god, by believing him, and disbelieving their Maker. 2. Though they received, yet they observed not that ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. They contemned that ordinance so plainly enjoined them, and would needs carve out to themselves how to serve the Lord. 3. They took the name of the Lord their God in vain; despising His attributes, His justice, truth, power, &c. They grossly profaned the sacramental tree, abused His word, by not giving credit to it, abused that creature of His which they should not have touched, and violently misconstrued His providence, as if God, by forbidding them that tree, had been standing in the way of their happiness; therefore He suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment. 4. They remembered not the Sabbath to keep it holy, but put themselves out of a condition to serve God aright on His own day; neither kept they that state of holy rest wherein God had put them. 5. They cast off their relative duties; Eve forgets herself, and acts without the advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation, and confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. They honoured not their Father in heaven, and therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them. 6. They ruined themselves, and all their posterity. 7. Gave themselves up to luxury and sensuality. 8. Took away what was not their own, against the express will of the great Owner. 9. They bore false witness, and lied against the Lord, before angels, devils, and one another; in effect giving out that they were hardly dealt by, and that Heaven grudged their happiness. 10. They were discontented with their lot, and coveted an evil covetousness to their house; which ruined both them and theirs. Thus was the image of God on man defaced all at once.

IV: I shall now apply this Doctrine of the Corruption of Nature.

Use I: For information. Is man’s nature wholly corrupted? Then,

1: No wonder that the grave opens its devouring mouth for us, as soon as the womb has cast us forth; and that the cradle is turned into a coffin, to receive the corrupt lump: for we are all, in a spiritual sense, dead-born; yea, and filthy (Psalms 14:3), noisome, rank, and stinking as a corrupt thing, as the word imports. Then let us not complain of the miseries we are exposed to at our entrance into, nor of the continuance of them while we are in the world. Here is the venom that has poisoned all the springs of earthly enjoyments we have to drink of. It is the corruption of man’s nature that brings forth all the miseries of human life, in churches, states, and families, and in men’s souls and bodies.

2: Behold here, as in a glass, the spring of all the wickedness, profanity, and formality, which is in the world; the source of all the disorders in thy own heart and life. Every thing acts like itself, agreeable to its own nature; and so corrupt man acts corruptly. You need not wonder at the sinfulness of your own heart and life, nor at the sinfulness and perverseness of others; if a man be crooked, he cannot but halt; and if the clock be set wrong, how can it point the hour aright?

3: See here, why sin is so pleasant, and religion such a burden to carnal spirits: sin is natural, holiness not so. Oxen cannot feed in the sea, nor fishes in the fruitful fields. A swine brought into a palace would soon get away again, to wallow in the mire; and corrupt nature tends ever to impurity.

4: Learn from this the nature and necessity of regeneration. First, This discovers the nature of regeneration, in these two things: x. It is not a partial, but a total change, though imperfect in this life. Your whole nature is corrupted; therefore the cure must go through every part. Regeneration makes not only a new head, for knowledge, but a new heart, and new affections, for holiness — 'All things become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17). If a man, having received many wounds, should be cured of them all, save one only, he might bleed to death by that one as well as by a thousand: so, if the change go not through the whole man, it is naught. 2. It is not a change made by human industry, but by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. A man must be born of the Spirit (John 3:5). Accidental diseases may be cured by men; but those which are natural, not without a miracle (John 9:32). The change wrought upon men by good education, or forced upon them by a natural conscience, though it may pass among men for a saving change, yet it is not so; for our nature is corrupt, and none but the God of nature can change it. Though a gardener, by ingrafting a pear branch into an apple tree, may make the apple tree bear pears, yet the art of man cannot change the nature of the apple tree: so a man may fix a new life to his old heart, but he can never change the heart. Secondly, This also shews the necessity of regeneration. It is absolutely necessary, in order to salvation (John 3:3), 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' No unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; but you are wholly unclean, while in your natural state. If every member of your body were disjointed, each joint must be loosened before the members can be set right again. This is the case of your soul, as you have heard: therefore you must be born again; otherwise you shall never see heaven, unless it be afar off, as the rich man in hell did. Deceive not yourself: no mercy of God, no blood of Christ, will bring you to heaven in your unregenerate state: for God will never open a fountain of mercy to wash away His own holiness and truth; nor did Christ shed His precious blood, to blot out the truths of God, or to overturn God's measures about the salvation of sinners. Heaven! What would you do there, you who are not born again? you who are no ways fitted for Christ the Head? That would be a strange sight! a holy Head, and members wholly corrupt! a Head full of treasures of grace, and members wherein are nothing but treasures of wickedness! a Head obedient to the death, and heels kicking against heaven! You are no better adapted for the society above, than beasts are for converse with men. You are a hater of true holiness; and at the first sight of a saint there, would cry out — 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!' Nay, the unrenewed man, if it were possible he could go to heaven in that state, would go to it no otherwise than now he comes to the duties of holiness; that is, leaving his heart behind him.

Use II: For lamentation. Well may we lament your case, O natural man! for it is the saddest case one can be in out of hell. It is time to lament for you; for you are dead already, dead while you live: you carry about with you a dead soul in a living body; and because you are dead you cannot lament your own case. You are loathsome in the sight of God; for you are altogether corrupt; you have no good in you. Your soul is a mass of darkness, rebellion, and vileness, before the Lord. You think, perhaps, that you have a good heart to God, good inclinations, and good desires: but God knows there is nothing good in you: 'Every imagination of thine heart is only evil continually.'

You can do no good; you can do nothing but sin. For, 1: You are the servant of sin (Romans 6:17), and therefore free from righteousness (Romans 6:20). Whatever righteousness be, poor soul, you are free from it; you do not, you cannot meddle with it. You are under the dominion of sin, a dominion where righteousness can have no place. You are a child and servant of the devil, seeing you are yet in a state of nature (John 8:44), 'Ye are of your father the devil.' And, to prevent any mistake, consider, that sin and Satan have two sort of servants: 1. There are some employed, as it were, in coarser work; those bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness; but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists, not so much as performing the external duties of religion, but living in the view of the world as sons of the earth, only attending to earthly things (Php 3:19). 2. There are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil's mark in their right hand; which they can and do hide from the eyes of the world. These are close hypocrites, who sacrifice as much to the corrupt mind, as the others to the flesh (Ephesians 2:3). These are ruined by a more secret trade of sin; pride, unbelief, self-seeking, and the like, swarm in, and prey upon their corrupted, wholly corrupted souls. Both are servants of the same house; the latter as far as the former from righteousness.

2: How is it possible that you should be able to do any good, you whose nature is wholly corrupt? — Can fruit grow where there is no root? or, Can there be an effect without a cause? 'Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?' If your nature be wholly corrupt, as indeed it is, all you do is certainly so too; for no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause. 'Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?' (Matthew 7:18).

Ah! what a miserable spectacle is he that can do nothing but sin! You are the man, whoever you are, that are yet in your natural state. Hear, O sinner, what is your case.

(1) Innumerable sins compass you about: mountains of guilt are lying upon you; floods of impurities overwhelm you, living lusts of all sorts roll up and down in the dead sea of your soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. Your lips are unclean; the opening of your mouth is as the opening of an unripe grave, full of stench and rottenness (Romans 3:13), 'Their throat is an open sepulchre.' Your natural actions are sin; for 'when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?' (Zechariah 7:6). Your civil actions are sin (Proverbs 21:4), 'The ploughing of the wicked is sin.' Your religious actions are sin (Proverbs 15:8), 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.' The thoughts and imaginations of your heart are only evil continually. A deed may be soon done, a word soon spoken, a thought swiftly pass through the heart; but each of these is an item in your accounts. O sad reckoning! so many thoughts, words, and actions, so many sins. The longer you live, your accounts swell the more. Should a tear be dropt for every sin, your head must be waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears; for nothing but sin comes from you. Your heart frames nothing but evil imaginations: there is nothing in your life but what is framed by your heart; and, therefore, there is nothing in your heart or life but evil.

(2) All your religion, if you have any, is lost labour, as to acceptance with God, or any saving effect on yourself. Are you yet in your natural state? Truly, then, your duties are sins, as was just now hinted. Would not the best wine be loathsome in a vessel wherein there is no pleasure? So is the religion of an unregenerate man. Under the law, the garment which the flesh of the sacrifice was carried in, though it touched other things, did not make them holy: but he that was unclean who

touched any thing, whether common or sacred, made it unclean. Even so your duties cannot make your corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves be good; but your corrupt heart defiles them, and makes them unclean (Haggai 2:12-14). You were wont to divide your works into two sorts; some good, some evil: but you must count again, and put them all under one head: for God writes on them all ‘only evil.’ This is lamentable: it will be no wonder to see those beg in harvest, who fold their hands, and sleep in seedtime; but to be labouring with others in the spring, and yet have nothing to reap when the harvest comes, is a very sad case, and will be the case of all professors living and dying in their natural state.

(3) You cannot help yourself. What can you do, to take away your sin, who are wholly corrupt? Nothing, truly but sin. If a natural man begin to relent, drop a tear for his sin, and reform, presently the corrupt heart takes merit to itself; he has done much himself, he thinks, and God cannot but do more for him on that account. In the mean time, he does nothing but sin: so that the fitness of the merit is, that the leper be put out of the camp, the dead soul buried out of sight, and the corrupt lump cast into the pit. How can you think to recover yourself by any thing which you can do? Will mud and filth wash out filthiness? and will you purge out sin by sinning? ‘Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one’ (Job 14:4). This is the case of your corrupt soul; not to be recovered but by Jesus Christ. ‘O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help’ (Hosea 13:9). You are poor indeed, extremely ‘miserable and poor’ (Revelation 3:17). You have no shelter, but a refuge of lies; no garment for your soul, but filthy rags; nothing to nourish it, but husks that cannot satisfy. And more than this, you got such a bruise in the loins of Adam, as is not yet cured, so that you are without strength, as well as ungodly (Romans 5:6); unable to do, or work for yourself; nay, more than all this, you cannot so much as seek aright, but are lying helpless, as an infant exposed in the open field (Ezekiel 16:5).

Use III: I exhort you to believe this sad truth. Alas! it is evident that it is very little believed in the world. Few are concerned to get their corrupt conversation changed; but fewer, by far, to get their nature changed. Most men know not what they are, nor what spirits they are of; they are as the eye, which, seeing many things, never sees itself. But until you know every one the plague of his own heart, there is no hope of your recovery. Why will you not believe it? You have plain Scripture testimony for it; but you are loath to entertain such an ill opinion of yourselves. Alas! This is the nature of your disease (Revelation 3:17), ‘Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ Lord, open their eyes to see it, before they die of it, and in hell lift up their eyes, and see what they will not see now.

I shall close this weighty point, of the corruption of man’s nature, with a few words as to another doctrine from the text.

07.04. DOCTRINE: God takes special notice of our

DOCTRINE: God takes special notice of our natural corruption This He testifies two ways: 1. By His Word, as in the text — ‘God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually’ (see Psalms 14:2-3). 2. By His works. God marks His particular notice of it, and displeasure with it, as in many of His works, so especially in these two.

1: In the death of the infant children of men. Many miseries they have been exposed to: they were drowned in the deluge, consumed in Sodom by fire and brimstone; they have been slain with the sword, dashed against the stones, and are still dying ordinary deaths. What is the true cause of this? On what ground does a holy God thus pursue them? Is it the sin of their parents? That may be the occasion of the Lord’s raising the process against them; but it must be their own sin that is the ground of the sentence passing on them: for ‘the soul that sinneth, it shall die,’ saith God (Ezekiel 18:4). Is it their own actual sin? They have none. But as men do with serpents, which they kill at first sight, before they have done any hurt, because of their venomous nature, so it is in this case.

2: In the birth of the elect children of God. When the Lord is about to change their nature, He makes the sin of their nature lie heavy on their spirits. When He means to let out their corruption, the lance goes deep into their souls, reaching to the root of sin (Romans 7:7-9). The flesh, or corruption of nature, is pierced, being crucified, as well as the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24).

Use: Let us then have a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature. God sees it: O that we saw it too, and that sin were ever before us! What avails it to notice other sins, while this mother-sin is not noticed? Turn your eyes inward to the sin of your nature. It is to be feared, that many have this work to begin yet; that they have shut the door, while the grand thief is yet in the house undiscovered. This is a weighty point; and in handling of it, I shall notice these four heads:

Men overlooking their Natural Sin

I: I shall, for conviction, point at some evidences of men’s overlooking the sin of their nature, which yet the Lord takes particular notice of. 1. Men’s looking on themselves with such confidence, as if they were in no hazard of gross sins. Many would take it very unkindly to get such a caution as Christ gave his apostles (Luke 21:34), ‘Take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness.’ If any should suppose them to break out in gross abominations, each would be ready to say, ‘Am I a dog?’ It would raise the pride of their hearts, but not their fear and trembling, because they know not the corruption of their nature. 2. Want of tenderness towards those that fall. Many, in that case, cast off all feelings of Christian compassion, for they do not consider themselves, lest they also be tempted (Galatians 6:1). Men’s passions are often highest against the faults of others, when sin sleeps soundly in their own breasts. David, when he was at his worst, was most violent against the faults of others. While his conscience was asleep under his own guilt in the matter of Uriah, the Spirit of the Lord takes notice that his anger was greatly kindled against the man in the parable (2 Samuel 12:5). And, on good grounds, it is thought it was at the same time that he treated the

Ammonites so cruelly, as is related (2 Samuel 12:31), ‘Putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln.’ Grace makes men zealous against sin in others, as well as in themselves: but eyes turned inward to the corruption of nature clothe them with pity and compassion; and fill them with thankfulness to the Lord, that they themselves were not the persons left to be such spectacles of human frailty. 3. There are not a few, who, if they be kept from afflictions in worldly things, and from gross outbreakings in their conversation, know not what it is to have a sad heart. If they meet with a cross, which their proud hearts cannot stoop to bear, they are ready to say, O to be gone! but the corruption of their nature never makes them long for heaven. Lusts, scandalously breaking out at a time, will mar their peace, but the sin of their nature never makes them a heavy heart. 4. Delaying of repentance, in hopes to set about it afterwards. Many have their own appointed time for repentance and reformation, as if they were such complete masters over their lusts, that they can allow them to gather more strength, and yet overcome them. They take up resolutions to amend, without an eye to Jesus Christ, union with Him, and strength from him; a plain evidence that they are strangers to themselves; so they are left to themselves, and their flourishing resolutions wither; for, as they see not the necessity, so they get not the benefit, of the dew from heaven to water them. 5. Men’s venturing freely on temptations, and promising liberally in their own strength. They cast themselves fearlessly into temptation, in confidence of their coming off fairly: but, were they sensible of the corruption of their nature, they would be cautious of entering on the devil’s ground, as one girt about with bags of gunpowder would be unwilling to walk where sparks of fire are flying, lest he should be blown up. Self-jealousy well becomes Christians. ‘Lord, is it I?’ They that know the deceit of their bow, will not be very confident that they shall hit the Mark 6:1-56. Ignorance of heart-plagues. The knowledge of the plagues of the heart is a rare qualification. There are indeed some of them written in such great characters, that he who runs may read them: but there are others more subtle, which few discern. How few are there, to whom the bias of the heart to unbelief is a burden! Nay, they perceive it not. Many have had sharp convictions of other sins, that were never to this day convinced of their unbelief; though that is the sin especially aimed at in a thorough conviction (John 16:8-9), ‘He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on Me.’ A disposition to establish our own righteousness is a weed that naturally grows in every man’s heart; but few labour at the plucking of it up, it lurks undiscovered. The bias of the heart to the way of the covenant of works is a hidden plague of the heart to many. All the difficulty they find is, in getting up their hearts to duties: they find no difficulty in getting their hearts off them, and over them to Jesus Christ. How hard it is to bring men off from their own righteousness! Yea, it is very hard to convince them of their leaning to it at all. 7. Pride and self-conceit. A view of the corruption of nature would be very humbling, and oblige him that has it to reckon himself the chief of sinners. Under the greatest attainments and enlargements, it would be ballast to his heart, and hide pride from his eyes. The want of thorough humiliation, piercing to the sin of one’s nature, is the ruin of many professors: for digging deep makes great difference betwixt wise and foolish builders (Luke 6:48-49).

Original Sin to be specially noticed

II: I will lay before you a few things, in which you should have a special eye to original sin. 1. Have a special eye to it, in your application to Jesus Christ. Do you find any need of Christ, which sends you to Him as the Physician of souls? O forget not this disease when you are with the Physician.

They never yet knew well their errand to Christ, who went not to Him for the sin of their nature; for His blood to take away the guilt of it, and His Spirit to break the power of it. Though, in the bitterness of your souls, you should lay before Him a catalogue of your sins of omission and commission which might reach from earth to heaven, yet, if original sin were wanting in it, assure yourselves that you have forgot the best part of the errand which a poor sinner has to the Physician of souls. What would it have availed the people of Jericho, to have set before Elisha all the vessels in their city, full of the water that was naught, if they had not led him forth to the spring, to cast in salt there? (2 Kings 2:19-21). The application is easy. 2. Have a special eye to it in your repentance, whether in its beginning or its progress; in your first repentance, and in the renewing of your repentance afterwards. Though a man be sick, there is no fear of death, if the sickness strike not to his heart: and there is as little fear of the death of sin, as long as the sin of our nature is not touched. But if you would repent indeed, let the streams lead you up to the fountain; and mourn over your corrupt nature as the cause of all sin, in heart, lip, and life (Psalms 51:4-5), 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' 3. Have a special eye upon it in your mortification (Galatians 5:24), 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.' It is the root of bitterness that must be struck at; which the axe of mortification must be laid to, else we labour in vain. In vain do men go about to cleanse the stream, while they are at no pains about the muddy fountain: it is a vain religion to attempt to make the life truly good, while the corruption of nature retains its ancient vigour, and the power of it is not broken. 4. You are to eye it in your daily walk. He that would walk aright, must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of his own nature. It is not enough that we look about us, we must also look within us. There the wall is weakest; there our greatest enemy lies; and there are grounds for daily watching and mourning.

Why original Sin is to be especially noticed III: I shall offer some reasons, why we should especially notice the sin of our nature.

1: Because of all sins, it is the most extensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man, and spoils all. Other sins mar particular parts of the image of God, but this at once defaces the whole. A disease affecting any particular member of the body is dangerous; but that which affects the whole, is worse. The corruption of nature is the poison of the old serpent cast into the fountain of action, which infects every action, and every breathing of the soul.

2: It is the cause of all particular lusts, and actual sins, in our hearts and lives. It is the spawn which the great leviathan has left in the souls of men, from whence comes all the fry of actual sins and abominations (Mark 7:21), 'Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries,' &c. It is the bitter fountain; particular lusts are but rivulets running from it, which bring forth into the life a part only, and not the whole of what is within. The fountain is always above the stream: and where the water is good, it is best in the fountain; where it is bad, it is worst there. The corruption of nature being that which defiles all, it must needs be the most abominable thing.

3: It is virtually all sin, for it is the seed of all sins, which want but the occasion to set up their heads, being, in the corruption of nature as the effect in the virtue of its cause. Hence it is called 'a body of death' (Romans 7:24), as consisting of the several members belonging to such 'a body of sins' (Colossians 2:11), whose life lies in spiritual death. It is the cursed ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds. As the whole nest of venomous creatures must needs be more dreadful

than any few of them that come creeping forth, so the sin of your nature, that mother of abominations, must be worse than any particular lusts that appear stirring in your heart and life. Never did every sin appear, in the conversation of the vilest wretch that ever lived; but look you into your corrupt nature, and there you may see all and every sin, in the seed and root thereof. There is a fulness of all unrighteousness there (Romans 1:29). There is atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and whatsoever is vile. Possibly none of these appear to you in your heart; but there is more in that unfathomable depth of wickedness than you know. Your corrupt heart is like an ants' nest, on which, while the stone lies, none of them appear; but take off the stone, and stir them up but with the point of a straw, you will see what a swarm is there, and how lively they be. Just such a sight would your heart afford you, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint He has upon it, and suffer Satan to stir it up by temptation.

4: The sin of our nature is, of all sins, the most fixed and abiding. Sinful actions, though the guilt and stain of them may remain, yet in themselves they pass away. The drunkard is not always at his cups, nor the unclean person always acting lewdness: but the corruption of nature is an abiding sin; it remains with men in its full power, by night and by day; at all times fixed, as with bands of iron and brass, till their nature is changed by converting grace; and it remains even with the godly, until the death of the body, though not in its reigning power. Pride, envy, covetousness, and the like, are not always stirring in you; but the proud, envious, carnal nature, is still with you, even as the clock that is wrong is not always striking wrong, but the wrong set continues with it without intermission.

5: It is the great reigning sin (Romans 6:12), 'Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.' There are three things which you may observe in the corrupt heart: 1. There is the corrupt nature, the corrupt set of the heart, whereby men are unapt for all good, and fitted for all evil. This the apostle calls here 'sin which reigns.' 2. There are particular lusts, or dispositions of corrupt nature, which the apostle calls 'the lusts thereof;' such as pride, covetousness, &c. 3. There is one among these, which is, like Saul among the people, higher by far than the rest, namely, 'the sin which doth so easily beset us' (Hebrews 12:1). This we usually call the predominant sin,' because it doth, as it were, reign over other particular lusts, so that other lusts must yield to it. These three are like a river which divides itself into many streams, whereof one is greater than the rest; the corruption of nature is the river head, that has many particular lusts in which it runs, but it chiefly disburdens itself into what is commonly called one's predominant sin. Now all of these being fed by the sin of our nature, it is evident that it is the reigning sin, which never loses its superiority over particular lusts, which live and die with it, and by it. But, as in some rivers, the main stream runs not always in one and the same channel, so particular ruling sins may be changed, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age. Now, what does it avail to reform in other things, while the reigning sin remains in its full power? What though some particular lust be broken? if sin, the sin of our nature, keep the throne, it will set up another in its stead; as when a water-course is stopped in one place, if the fountain is not closed up, it will stream forth another way. Thus some cast off their prodigality, but covetousness comes up in its stead; some cast away their profanity, and the corruption of nature sends not its main stream that way, as before, but it runs in another channel, namely, in that of a legal disposition, self-righteousness, or the like. So that people are ruined, by their not eyeing the sin of their nature.

6: It is an hereditary evil (Psalms 51:5), ‘In sin did my mother conceive me.’ Particular lusts are not so, but in the virtue of their cause. A prodigal father may have a frugal son; but this disease is necessarily propagated in nature, and therefore hardest to cure. Surely, then, the word should be given out against this sin, as against the king of Israel (1 Kings 22:31), ‘Fight neither with small nor great, save only with this;’ for this sin being broken, all other sins are broken with it; and while it stands entire, there is no victory.

How to get a View of the Corruption of Nature

IV: That you may get a view of the corruption of your nature, I would recommend to you three things: 1. Study to know the spirituality and extent of the law of God, for that is the glass wherein you may see yourselves. 2. Observe your hearts at all times, but especially under temptation. Temptation is a fire that brings up the scum of the vile heart: carefully mark the first risings of corruption. 3. Go to God, through Jesus Christ, for illumination by His Spirit. Lay out your soul before the Lord, as willing to know the vileness of your nature: say unto Him, ‘That which I know not, teach thou me.’ And be willing to take light in from the Word. Believe, and you shall see. It is by the Word the Spirit teacheth; but without the Spirit’s teaching, all other teaching will be to little purpose. Though the gospel were to shine about you like the sun at noon-day, and this great truth were ever so plainly preached, you would never see yourselves aright, until the Spirit of the Lord light His candle within your breast: the fulness and glory of Christ, and the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned, but where the Spirit of Christ is the teacher. To conclude this weighty point, let the consideration of what has been said commend Christ to you all. You that are brought out of your natural state of corruption unto Christ, be humble; still come to Christ, and improve your union with Him, to the further weakening of your natural corruption. Is your nature changed? It is but in part so. If you are cured, remember the cure is not yet perfected, you still go halting. Though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you were by nature should keep you low. You that are yet in your natural state, take this with you: believe the corruption of your nature; and let Christ and His grace be precious in your eyes. O that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls! What do you intend to do? You must die; you must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not: for, before another day, you may be summoned before God’s dreadful tribunal, in the grave-clothes of your corrupt state; and your vile souls be cast into the pit of destruction, as a corrupt lump, to be for ever buried out of God’s sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven, for you, in your natural state: there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. If the brittle thread of your life, which may break with a touch ere you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined for ever, without remedy. But come speedily to Jesus Christ: He has cleansed souls as vile as yours; and He will yet ‘cleanse the blood that he has not cleansed’ (Joel 3:21). Thus far of the sinfulness of man’s natural state.

Chapter 97

S. Christ's Name Wonderful

Christ’s Name Wonderful by Thomas Boston This is the name of our incarnate Redeemer, and when we hear it named, it must represent to us the Son of God in man’s nature.

USE 1. O the love of God to poor sinners of mankind! 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. The greatest work that ever God did was for their salvation. He made the world for man and gave it to him, Psalms 115:16, and the visible heavens, too, Genesis 1:17. Yes, the highest heavens also He made for them and gives to them in His Son, Matthew 25:34. But a greater work than all these He did for them when He did this miracle of the incarnation of His own Son for them, and gave Him, an incarnate Redeemer, to them. O how can we escape the most fearful doom if we neglect this great salvation! How worthy are they to perish who will not be saved when God has wrought this greatest miracle to save them?

USE 2. What unaccountable stupidity is it in men not to consider, admire, and be swallowed up in contemplation of this miracle; and not to be in deepest love with this miraculous personage given to them? Ah! Have we not all been careless, unmoved spectators of this miracle? How many have never spent a few minutes in the consideration and admiration of Him? Have ye not gazed on and wondered at some trifle more than at this greatest of the works of God? Have ye not been more deeply in love with some person or thing for its shadowy excellencies than with this miraculous person? Cease to wonder at the Jews’ obstinancy in not being moved to believe by all His miracles; for a greater than them all is here, to wit, His miraculous self; and yet we are unmoved.

What is the import of Christ as God-man, His being and appearing to be a miraculous, most wonderful one? Considering this as the name of Christ, to commend Him to sinners, it imports:

1. The excellency of His person as God-man. He is an excellent, glorious, and lovely one. Hebrews 1:3, Being the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person. Though the blind world perceives not His excellency, saying as Isaiah 53:2, He hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. It is not but through their own default, by reason of their blindness; for His glory shines forth, to be perceived by those whose eyes are opened. John 1:14, We beheld His glory, etc. But the glory of the sun is not seen by the blind man, nor the glory of Christ by unbelievers.

2. The fulness of excellencies in Him, our incarnate Redeemer. His name is "Miracle," a collective word. There is a confluence of excellencies in Him. Look to Him in every part, and all is excellent in Him. Song of Solomon 5:16, He is altogether lovely. Some excel in one thing, some in another, as Moses in meekness, Samson in strength, Solomon in wisdom; but none but Christ is all. Moses, we would say, was a miracle of meekness; Samson of strength; and Solomon of wisdom. But Christ is a miracle all over: meekness, strength, wisdom, and all other excellencies meet in Him to a miracle. There is no blemish, no lack at all in Him. Colossians 1:9, For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.

3. The uncommonness and singularity of His excellencies. Miracles are but rare, in respect of the common operations of providence. And Christ among the sons of men is as a standard bearer among ten thousand, Song of Solomon 5:10. He is a person of singular excellencies. It is observed that what is done by miracle does in its kind excel what is the product of nature in that kind. The water that was made wine was far better than the wine of the vine, John 2:10. So the man Christ is fairer than the sons of men, Psalms 45:2. So every excellency in Christ is beyond that excellency in another, so was Christ's meekness beyond Moses' meekness, His strength beyond Samson's, and His wisdom beyond Solomon's, as the sun's light is beyond that of the stars.

4. The absolute matchlessness of His person for excellency and glory. Proverbs 8:11, Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. Seek through all the creatures in heaven and earth, and there is none comparable to Him. Psalms 73:25, Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. His match is not to be found among all the ranks of created beings.

5. The shining forth of His excellencies, fit to draw all eyes upon Him. A miracle is the center of men's eyes to which all men are ready to look. It is a sight everyone would desire to see, and to see narrowly. There is an attractive beauty and glory in this wonderful one. This is a mystery to the world who are ready to say, as Song of Solomon 5:9, What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou cost so charge us? seeing nothing in Him to fix their eyes upon Him. But,

(1) His Father's eyes are fixed on Him as the object of His good pleasure. Matthew 3:17, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The eyes of the Holy Spirit are on Him. Zechariah 3:9, Behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of Hosts. Compared with Revelation 5:6, In the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

(2) The eyes of the angels are drawn after Him as a most wonderful sight. The faces of the cherubim were therefore made looking towards the mercy-seat, Exodus 25:20, to teach us that Christ the Mediator, reconciling God and sinners, is the object of the angel's wonder. 1 Peter 1:12, which things the angels desire to look into.

(3) The eyes of all the saints are drawn after Him as the object of their admiration and affection. No sooner are the eyes of the blind soul opened, but they fix on Him. John 4:10, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. Therefore faith is called "looking unto Christ." Isaiah 45:22, Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. And it is not a looking after a wonder of a few days, but it must remain all along their course through the world. And when they come to glory, they will fix their eyes on Him forever, never weary, but always refreshed with the sight. And that the eyes of all men are not upon Him is because they know Him not, and are not capable of discerning His glory. Psalms 9:10, And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.

Whosoever truly discerns what Christ is cannot choose but to love Him above all persons and things, and choose Him for their portion being offered to them. His matchless excellencies make

Him such a lovely one that the discovery of them commands the surrender of the heart to Him and captivates the affections. It sinks the value of all created things in competition with Him and enthrones Him in the heart. Hence, true believers can neither be boasted nor bribed, frightened nor flattered from His love.

Believers' love to Christ must be lasting and everlasting, for His excellencies are infinite and incomprehensible. When we meet with an object among the creatures that commands our admiration and love, we are taken with it; but some defect comes afterwards to be perceived in it, and then the admiration ceases or turns into contempt. At least the perfections of the object are all seen through and they become familiar, and the admiration dwindles into nothing. And what was at first sight admired as new ceases to be so when it affords nothing more new. But no defect or blemish can ever be spied in Him, who is fairer than the sun; and there being an incomprehensible depth of excellencies in Him, there is ever a place for new discoveries, so the admiration must be kept up forever.

Those whose greatest admiration and supreme love Christ is not the object of are yet certainly in the midnight darkness of their natural state. Whosoever of you admire and love any created person or thing as much or more than Christ, you have never yet seen nor known Him. The predominant love of the world, prizing and esteeming the things thereof above Him, is a concluding evidence that you are walking in the dark, that the scales are yet on your eyes, and that Christ is a veiled Christ to you.

Christ is God and man in one person. Here is a wonderful person indeed whom we cannot comprehend; true God, yet man; true man, yet God. The uniting of a soul to an earthly body, forming one person called man was a work of wonder; but what is the putting together of two pieces of clay in comparison of the Potter's uniting with His own clay? Should we behold an angel assuming to himself and appearing in a crawling worm as if it were his own body, we would cease to wonder at it, beholding this surpassing wonder, an incarnate God! Here eternity and a being of yesterday meet together in one person, a child, and yet the everlasting Father. Here infinite and finite meet in one; God and His own creature!

He is wonderful in His perfections and qualifications. Psalms 45:2, Thou art fairer than the children of men. Grace is poured into Thy lips. All qualities that render one desirable and lovely meet together in Him, and all those are in Him to a miraculous pitch. So His Father is well-pleased in Him, Matthew 3:17, and the Spirit rested upon Him, verse 16. And every soul beholding Him with an eye of faith will take up its eternal rest in Him.

Particularly He is wonderful in His spotless and unchangeable holiness and purity. The fulness of the Spirit of holiness is in Him. The brightest of the saints here below do not lack their spots; at best they are but fair as the moon, but there is no darkness in Him at all.

He is wonderful in the concentering of all perfections in Him, each in its perfection. Song of Solomon 5:16, his mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely.

He is wonderful along in His duration. Some are wonderful in one part of their life, some in another, but He is miracle all over His duration.

He is wonderful in His love. His love will appear wonderful if you consider the subject of it, the party loving us. He is the eternal Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth. That the Father's delight should have made the sons of men His delight may cause us to cry out, Psalms 8:4, Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him? Or the son of man that Thou makest account of him?

Consider the effect, force, and energy of this love. It is absolutely matchless. Never did any love work so powerfully as His, and it does not rest until He has His own with Himself in the highest heavens forever. The qualities of it are wonderful. It is free love, Hosea 14:4. It is sovereign love. Christ's love had nothing from us to kindle it. It is tender love. It is unchangeable love. It is everlasting love. And thus Christ appears to be all over wonderful. See then,

1. The greatness of the Father's love in giving to us such a wonderful one for our Prince. The love of God appears here to a wonder. O what honor is put upon man by making such a gift to him, that which heaven could not give a greater! O what happiness appears to be designed for man by this gift!

2. The reasonableness of the believer's superlative love to Christ. Every believing soul loves Christ above all persons and all things. They will love Him more than all the world and all that is therein, and more than their own life, Luke 14:26. And good reason for it, because there is no object so lovely. If we look to confessors parting with their goods, their liberty, and their worldly comforts for Christ, to the martyrs parting with their lives, embracing fires, gibbets, and the most cruel deaths for Christ, we will cease to wonder at their so doing when we consider what a wonderful One He is for whom they undergo the loss of all. Gaining Christ, they are the greatest gainers, whatever they lose, Php 3:7-8.

3. The reasonableness of the gospel-demand to all to receive and submit to Christ as their Prince and Governor. His transcendent excellency entitles Him to the principality and government over the sons of men. His merit requires our absolute resignation to Him.

Lastly, see the dreadful sin and danger of slighting this Christ. The more wonderful and excellent He is, the deeper will be the guilt of refusing Him. The deeper the guilt, the more fearful will be the vengeance for rejecting Him. Hebrews 2:3, How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Be exhorted, then, to give this wonderful One your heart. Proverbs 23:26, My son, give my thine heart.

Make Him the choice of your soul. Take Him for your portion as One who is the best of portions. Let your souls solemnly consent to the gospel offer.

Part with all for Him, as the wise merchant who sold all that he had and bought the one pearl of great price, Matthew 13:44-45. Give up your lusts and your idols; renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, resting on Christ for all for time and eternity.

Dwell in the contemplation of His matchless excellencies. Let it be the substance of your religion to love Him, to admire Him, to be swallowed up in His love. And let love to Him set your souls moving in all holy obedience.

MOTIVE 1. You can never bestow your hearts so well. What is all the world in comparison to Christ but loss and dung? Alas! That shadows should have our hearts while the most substantial

good courts it.

MOTIVE 2. Consider that it is for this end Christ is commended to you. We preach Christ that you may fall in love with Him.

MOTIVE 3. Lastly, consider how you will answer for it to Him before the tribunal, that you have preferred others lovely to the lovely One.

Chapter 98

S. Come Unto Me All Ye That Labour

“Come Unto Me All Ye That Labour”

Thomas Boston “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” —Matthew 11:28. The great and main object of gospel-preaching and gospel-practice, is a coming to Christ. It is the first article in Christianity, according to John 5:40, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” It is the connecting chain, 1 Peter 2:4, “To whom coming as unto a living stone...ye also as lively stones are built up...“ And it is the last exercise of the Christian; for when finishing his warfare, the invitation is, Matthew 25:34, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you...“ It is virtually the all which God requireth of us, John 6:29, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” The words of the text are a most solemn and ample invitation which Christ gives to sinners. In them I shall consider, The connection. For which look to John 6:25-26, compare Luke 10:21, “Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” It was a joyful time to him when he made this invitation. He rejoiced in the account of the good news, the success with which the message of the disciples was attended; and in the wise and sovereign dispensation of grace by the Father, which he here celebrates, as also upon the view of his own power, where he shows, that all power was lodged in him. The keys of the Father’s treasures of grace were in his hand, yea, and whatsoever is the Father’s. He also shows that none could know the Father, but by him, for that is given to him only. He, as it were, opens the treasure-door to sinners in the text. From the connection of this verse, as just now stated, I would observe, that the solemnity of this invitation is most observable. There seems something to be about it more than ordinary. As,

1. It was given in the day of Christ’s gladness. He was a man of sorrows, all made up of sorrows. Sorrow, sighing, weeping, groaning, were his ordinary fare. Once indeed we read of his being glad, John 11:15; and once of his rejoicing, Luke 10:21. And, again, on this occasion here that thread of sorrow was interrupted, the sun of joy broke out for a little from under the cloud. His heart was touched, and, as it were, leaped for joy, as the word signifies; compare Matthew 5:12 with Luke 6:23. In the Greek, “he was exceeding joyful.” At this extraordinary time and frame, he gives the invitation in the text. Hence infer,

1st. That Christ invites sinners with an enlarged heart. Joy enlarges it. His heart is open to you, his arms are stretched wide. You often see him with sorrow and anger in his face, and this works with you that you will not come. Behold him smiling and inviting you now to himself, sending love-looks to lost sinners, from a joyful heart within! Infer,

2nd. May I say, the Mediator’s joy is not complete, till you come and take a share? The Scriptures will warrant the expression, Isaiah 53:11. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” He rejoiceth, but resteth not; but invites sinners to a share, as if all could not satisfy while he goes childless, as to some he has yet an eye upon. Infer,

3rd. That nothing can make Christ forget poor sinners, or be unconcerned for them. Sorrow could not do it, joy could not do it; either of these will drive a narrow-spirited man so into himself, as to

forget all others. But never was his heart so filled either with sorrow or joy, but there was always room for poor sinners there. When he was entering the ocean of wrath, he remembered them, John 17:1-26; and as our forerunner, he went into the ocean of joy. Hebrews 6:20. Like Aaron, he carried our names on his heart, when he went in to appear before the Lord in heaven, Exodus 28:29.

2. The invitation was given at a time when there was a great breach made in the devil's kingdom, compare Luke 10:17-18. Christ was now beginning to set up a new kingdom, and he sends out seventy disciples, which was the number of the Sanhedrin at first. He was to bring his people out of the spiritual Egypt, compare Genesis 46:27. The success of the disciples was a fair pledge of the devil's kingdom coming down, and the delivery of sinners. And when the news of it comes, his heart rejoices, and his tongue breaks out in this invitation to the devil's captives, to come away upon this glorious signal. As he had begun to perform this part of the covenant, the Father had begun to perform his, which made his heart leap for joy, and sets him on to cry, that they would all come away, as disciples, vigorously to pursue the advantage which was got, Psalms 110:7, "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head." Hence infer,

1st. That Christ's heart is set upon the work of sinners' salvation. Ye see no undue haste, but he would have no delays. He holds hands to the work calling, Come unto me. He preferred it to the eating of his bread; and what else is the meaning of all the ordinances and providences ye meet with? Infer,

2nd. That Christ would have you to come, taking encouragement from the example of others that have come before you. There is a gap made in the devil's prison; some have made their escape by it already, O! will ye not follow? The Lord has set examples for us, both of judgment and of mercy. In the beginnings of the Jewish church, there was an example of God's sovereignty, in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:1-2; and of the Christian church, in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-42; of mercy, in the Jewish church, Rahab the harlot, besides Abraham, the father of them all, an idolater, Joshua 24:2 (compare Isaiah 51:2). Then in the Christian church, Paul, the blasphemous persecutor, 1 Timothy 1:16. Infer,

3rd. That however full Christ's house be, there is always room for more; he wearies not of welcoming sinners; the more that come the better. Christ's harvest is not all cut down at once, nor his house built in a day; if the last stone were laid in the building, the scaffolding of ordinances would be taken down, and the world be at an end. But none of these has hitherto taken place; therefore yet there is room, Joel 3:21, "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not yet cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

3. This invitation is given on a solemn review of that fullness, of that all which the Father hath lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and that solely. The Father, as it were, no sooner leads him into these treasures, but he says, "This and this is for you, sinners; here is a treasure of mercies and blessings for you; pardon, life, peace, etc., all is for you. Come, therefore, unto me, the Father has delivered them into my hand, I long to deliver them over to you. Come, therefore, to me, and hence I shall draw my fullness out to you." Christ had got a kingdom from the Father; it was as yet thinly peopled, and so he calls you to come to him, that ye may be happy in him. He has no will to enjoy these things alone, but because he has them, he would have you to take a share.

Reasons why Christ is so kind and liberal as to invite sinners of mankind to come to him, that they may share of his special goodness.

1. Because the Father hath given him for that end: Isaiah 55:4, “Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.” The Father had thoughts of love to man; his love designed to distribute a treasure of mercy, pardon, and grace, to lost sinners; but justice would not allow his giving them immediately out of his own hand; therefore he gives them to the Mediator to distribute. An absolute God being a consuming fire, guilty creatures, as stubble, could not endure his heat, but they would have been burnt up by it; therefore he sets his own Son in man’s nature, as a crystal-wall betwixt him and them; he gives him the Spirit without measure, not only a fullness of sufficiency, but abundance of blessings, is laid up in him; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell.—He is so,

2. Because he received a fullness of treasure for that very end. John 17:19, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” The first Adam got mankind’s stock; he soon lost all. Christ takes the elect’s stock in his hand for their security, and so he is given for a covenant of the people; he takes the burden upon him for them, and takes the administration of the second covenant, that it might, with them, be a better covenant than the first.—He is so,

3. Because he bought these treasures at the price of his blood for their behoof. Php 2:8-9, “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name.” The Son of God, who is Lord of all, needed no exaltation in the court of heaven, being equal with his Father, but his design was, to exalt man’s nature, to make these that were the children of the devil—friends to heaven, and prepare for them room there. “I go,” said he, “to prepare a place for you,” John 14:2. No wonder, then, that he should long to see the purchase of his blood, the fruit of the travail of his soul, come to him.—He is kind and liberal,

4. Because of his love to them. Where true love is, there is an aptness to communicate; the lover cannot see the beloved want what he has. God’s love is giving love: “He so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,” John 3:16. Christ’s love is also such; he loves indeed: “He loved us, and gave himself for us,” Galatians 2:20.—For the improvement of this doctrine, I only add an use of exhortation.

Come to Christ, then, O sinners, upon this his invitation, and sit not his blessed call.—To enforce this, I urge these motives.

1. There is a fullness in him, all power is given him; want what you will, he has a power to give it to you; the Son of Man had power, even on earth, to forgive sins. Grace without you, or grace within you, he is the dispenser of all. John 1:16, “And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” He is the great Secretary of heaven, the keys hang at his girdle; he shuts, and none can open; he opens, and none can shut.—Consider,

2. You are welcome to it. He has it not to keep up, but to give out, and to whom but to needy sinners? Even the worst of you are welcome, if you will take it out of his own hand: “If any man thirst,” says he, “let him come to me, and drink,” John 7:37.

3. Would you do Christ a pleasure? then come to him, Isaiah 53:11, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” Would you content and ease his heart? then come. It is a great ease to full breasts to be sucked. The breasts of his consolations are full, hear how pressingly he calls you to suck. “Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!”

4. Would you fall in with the designs of the Father’s and the Son’s love, in the mystery of salvation? then come to him. Why is a fountain opened, but that ye may run to it, and wash? Seal not, shut not that to yourselves, which God and Christ have opened. The character of the persons whom Christ invites to come to him.

These are they that “labour,” and are “heavy-laden.” The word labour, signifies not every labouring, but a labouring to weariness, and so some read it weary. Heavy-laden are they that have a heavy burden on their back, which they are not able to bear. Who are meant by these? I cannot agree with those that restrain these expressions to those that are sensible of their sins and misery, without Christ, and are longing to be rid of the same; but I think it includes all that are out of Christ, sensible or insensible; that is, these that have not had, and these that have had, a law-work upon their consciences. And, to fix this interpretation, consider,

1. The words agree to all that are out of Christ, and none have any right to restrain them. None more properly labour, in the sense of the text, than those that are out of Christ, seeking their satisfaction in the creatures, Ecclesiastes 1:8, “All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” And who have such a burden of sin and wrath upon their back as they have? The word properly signifies a ship’s lading, which, though insensible of it, may yet sink under the weight. Consider,

2. “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” 1 John 5:19, as men in a deep mire, still sinking. Christ came to deliver men out of that case; having taken upon him our nature, Hebrews 2:16, he caught hold (Greek) as one doth of a drowning man, even as he did of Peter when sinking, Matthew 14:31. And what are the invitations of the gospel, but Christ putting out his hands to sinking souls, sinking with their own weight. Consider,

3. That the words, in other Scriptures, are without controversy applied to the most insensible sinners. See what labour and weariness! Habakkuk 2:13, “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people still labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” In the most solemn invitation to Christ in all the Old Testament, the word labouring is so used, Isaiah 55:2, “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Luke 11:46, “Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne.” Lade is the same Greek word used in the text, Isaiah 1:4, “Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.” Were they sensible? far from it; for, Isaiah 1:3, “Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” And, 2 Timothy 3:6, it is said, “Silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.”

4. Consider the parallel text, Isaiah 55:1, “Ho, every one that thirsteth;” where by the thirsty is not so much understood those that are thirsting after Christ, as those that are thirsting after happiness and satisfaction, seeking to squeeze it out of the creature; for the thirsty invited are the same that are spending their labour for that which satisfieth not. But these that are thirsting after Christ are not such.

5. If the words be a restriction of the call to sensible sinners, then the most part of sinners are excluded. If they are not included, sure they are excluded; and if the words are restrictive; sure they are not included; and then, so far from being the truth of the text, that it is no gospel-truth at all; for all, without exception, that hear the gospel, are called to come to Christ. Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” And if any one be not called, they have no warrant to come; and if so, unbelief is not their sin, as in the case of the Pagans; which is absurd.

6. This is a most solemn invitation to come to Christ; and if I say the most solemn, there is some ground for it by what is said before. And shall that be judged restrained, that so expressly and solemnly comes from that fullness of power lodged in Christ, more than that just quoted? Revelation 3:20, where there is no shadow of restriction. Besides, this restriction may well be a snare to an exercised soul, which ordinarily, by a legal disposition in all, will not allow that they may come to Christ, because sin is not heavy enough to them. But although sinners will never come to Christ till they see their need of him, yet this I will ever preach, that all, under pain of damnation, are obliged to come to him, and that they shall be welcome on their coming, be their case what it will; that such as are willing to come ought not to stop on a defect of their sensibleness, but come to him, that they may get a true sense of sin unto repentance; for he is “exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins,” Acts 5:31. He is to give, not to stand and wait, till “folly bring repentance with it.”* Consideration of what it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for. No man engageth in a labour, but for some end he proposeth to himself. Though the devil is oversman of these labourers, yet he does not make them go like clocks, without a design. Every one that labours proposes some profit to himself by his work, and so do these; there is always something, either really or seemingly good, that men seek in all their labours. So, in a word, it is happiness and satisfaction that they are labouring for, as well as the godly. For, consider,

1. The desire of happiness and satisfaction is natural to man; all men wish to see good. It is not the desire of good that may satisfy, that makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, but the different ways they take, Psalms 4:6-7, “There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.” In whatever case a man is on earth, in heaven or hell this is still his desire; and he must cease to be a man, ere he can cease to desire to be a happy man. When that desire, mentioned in Ecclesiastes 12:5, shall fail, this desire is still fresh and green; and it is good in itself. Our Lord supposeth this in the text, and therefore he promises to them what they are seeking, rest, if they will come to him.

2. This desire is the chief of all; all other things are desired for it. All men’s desires, however different, meet here, as all the rivers meet in the sea, though their courses may be quite contrary. Therefore this is what they labour for. The devil had some labourers at his coarse work, others at the more fine, but they all meet in their end.

3. Defects and wants are interwoven with the very nature of the creature; and the rational creature finds that it cannot be, nor is self-sufficient. Hence it seeks its happiness without itself, and must do it, to satisfy these natural desires.

4. Seeing, then, man's happiness is without himself, it must be brought in, which cannot be done without labour. It is proper to God to be happy in himself; but every creature must needs go out of itself to find its happiness; so that action is the true way to it, that is, rest cannot be found but in the way of action and labour, and because they are not in the right way, it is wearisome labour.

How it is, that men out of Christ labour for happiness.

Here, it is impossible to reckon up particulars, and that in regard,

1. Of the different dispositions of men, and the various, as well as contrary opinions, concerning what may make a man happy. Varro says, there were two hundred and eighty opinions touching the chief good in his time. It is true, Christianity, in the profession of it, hath fixed this point in principle; but nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in point of practice. The whole body of Christless sinners are like the Sodomites at Lot's door; all were for the door, but one grasps one part of the wall for it, another another part, not one of them found it. The world is, as the air in a summer-day, full of insects; and natural men, like a company of children, one running to catch one, another another, while none of them is worth the pains. One runs to the bowels of the earth, another to the ale-house, etc.,—It is impossible to determine here,

2. In regard of men's still altering their opinions about it, as they meet with new disappointments. Like a man in a mist, seeking a house in a wilderness, when every bush, tree, etc., deceives, till, by coming near, he is undeceived. "O! thinks the man, if I had such a thing, I would be well." Then he falls to labour for it; may be he never gets it, but he ever pursues it. If he gets it, he finds it will not do, for as big as it was afar off, yet it will not fill his hand when he grips it: but it must be filled, or no rest, hence new labour to bring forth just a new disappointment, Isaiah 26:18, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind."—It is difficult also,

3. Because they cannot tell themselves what they would be at. Their starving souls are like the hungry infant, that gapes, weeps, cries, and sucks everything that comes near its mouth, but cannot tell what it would have, but is still restless till the mother set it to the breast. It is regenerating grace that does that to the soul. The Hebrew word for believing comes from a root that signifies to nurse, as if faith were nothing but a laying of the soul on the breasts of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead. The Scripture holds him out as the mother that bare them; hence his people are called, Isaiah 53:11, the fruit "of the travail of his soul." He also is their nourisher; hence he says, Isaiah 1:2, "I have nourished and brought up children." The breasts of the church, Isaiah 66:11, at which they are to suck and be satisfied, are no other than Christ. But, in the general, to see from whence it is that men out of Christ go about to squeeze out their happiness, see Psalms 4:6-7, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." From which observe two things,

(1) That it is not God, for these two are set in opposition; go to as many doors as they will, they never go to the right door; hence it follows, that it is the creatures out of which they labour to draw their satisfaction: "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, they hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

(2) That it is good they are seeking out of them: and indeed men can seek nothing but under that notion, though for the most part they call evil good, and good evil. All good is either profitable,

pleasurable, or honest; these, then, are all that they are seeking, not from God, but from themselves, or other creatures. The two former have respect to the cravings of men's desires, the latter to the cravings of the law. And seeing it is not in God that they seek their happiness and satisfaction, I infer hence, That all out of Christ are labouring for their happiness and satisfaction in one or both of these ways, either from their lusts, or from the law; and this I take to be the very labour intended in the text. For which consider these three things:

1st. That all natural men have two principles in them, 1st, Corruption; 2nd, Conscience. Both crave of them, Romans 2:15, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." Hence, because they do not mortify the lust, they must be fed, or no rest; and therefore they labour for their lusts to satisfy them. Then, because they fly not to Christ for the satisfaction of their conscience, they go to the law.

2nd. The bulk of natural men in the world have still been of two sorts; 1st, The profane party; 2nd, The formal party. These have still been among Jews, Pagans, and Christians; the former labouring most in lusts, the latter in the law.

3rd. Adam left us with two yokes on our necks; 1st, Of lusts; 2nd, Of the law. The last was of God's putting, but he gave strength with it to bear it. Adam took away the strength, but left the yoke, and put on a yoke of lusts beside; and in opposition to both these, Christ bids us come and take on his yoke which is easy, and his burden, which is light, Matthew 11:30. As to the labour they have in their lusts, they call them, and they run after them. These infernal devils in the heart drive the swine of this world into the sea of perdition; nay, turn the soul itself into a very sea, that cannot rest. Isaiah 57:20, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." They labour like madmen for satisfaction to them, and no calm, no rest, till the soul come to Christ.

1. They labour hard in the lusts of profit. 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The profits of the world are the cisterns they squeeze for satisfaction; they bewitch the hearts of them that have them, and of them that want them; they fly after them with that pains and labour the ravenous bird doth after its prey. Proverbs 23:5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." The strength of men's desires, and the cream of their affections, are spent on them; their happiness depends upon its smiles, their misery upon its frowns; if gone, their god is gone. Hence is that verified, Habakkuk 2:13, "They labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity," like a poor fool running to catch a shadow. They have hard labour in lawful profits, how to get them, and how to keep them, but hardest of all, how to squeeze satisfaction out of them; there they labour in the very fire; they labour also in unlawful profits. The soul is an empty thing; lusts are ill to guide; conscience must make a stretch now and then, for the satisfaction of lusts; and the man will leap over the hedge, though the serpent will bite him. 1 Timothy 6:9-10, "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; for the love of money is the root of all evil." Hence the carnal man, I may say, never gets up his back, but on his belly doth he go, and labours, as if he were a slave condemned to the mines, to dig in the bowels of the earth; like the blind moles, his constant labour is in the earth, and

he never opens his eyes till he is dying. He has his lade of thick clay upon his back, Habakkuk 2:6, as the fruit of his labouring in the fire. There is thus a labouring and heavy-laden party. Others take the world in their hand as a staff, nay, tread on it as the dirt, and they get it as a burden on their back, while built, many times contracted in the getting of it, whether by oppression, cheatery, or neglecting of the soul for it, is like a sore back under the load, that makes them ready in despair to throw it away, but they know not how to subsist without it.

2. They labour in lusts of pleasure; they go about as the bee, extracting the sweet out of the creatures for their own satisfaction; this and the former usually go together. Profits and pleasures are the world's two great baits, at which all natural men are constantly leaping, till they are caught by the hook, and flung out into the fire of wrath. Proverbs 9:17-18, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and man cannot but seek it; hence God proposeth it to men in himself, who is the fountain of all sweetness. Psalms 16:11, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence there is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But blind man makes the creature-sweetness his idol, and puts it in the room of God; for "they are lovers of pleasures, [in this sense,] more than lovers of God," 2 Timothy 3:4. It is no fault to seek our profit; for, Hebrews 11:26, "We are to have respect unto the recompense of the reward." Nor to seek what may be sweet to the soul; for we may wish our souls to be "satisfied with marrow and fatness," Psalms 63:5. But the natural man's misery and sin both is, he forsakes God, and fastens on the breasts of the creatures for these things.

Now, there are two breasts of the creatures at which men may be sucking.

(1) The breast of lawful comforts. Natural men fall on these, instead of the breasts of God's consolations, and labour, though in vain, to squeeze happiness and satisfaction out of them, and that with the greatest eagerness. They are lawful in themselves, but they often press so hard, that they draw out blood instead of milk from them; and are like men working at a flinty rock, to bring out water, instead of which they get fire flashing in their face, as in that case, Judges 9:15, when "fire came out of the bramble to devour the cedars of Lebanon."—There is,

(2) The breast of unlawful comforts, Proverbs 9:17, "Stolen waters are sweet." Many seek their satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as to desire, and fill themselves with what God forbids them so much as to taste. O! the misery of Christless sinners, to whom both lawful and unlawful comforts are effectual snares for ruin. Like mad beasts, if they abide within the hedge, they tear up all to the red earth, which doth not yet satisfy. But they most usually break over all hedges; and they do so, because the creature can never fully answer the craving desires and hungry appetite, and yet, after all, they will not come to Christ, that they may have rest.

These beasts of the creatures have many springs, divers lusts and pleasures, Titus 3:3, and these are served; men must labour in them as a servant at his master's work. I shall reduce them to these two heads, mentioned, Ephesians 2:3, the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

1st. They labour for satisfaction and happiness in the pleasures of the flesh. And, 1. In sensuality. This was the door man first went to, after he had left God. And since the world was turned upside down by that means, the soul has lain downmost, and the flesh uppermost, so that they are all sensual, as Jude says, Jude 1:19, that have not the Spirit; and the soul is made drudge of the

body. The belly is a god, and the pleasures of the flesh are squeezed, for satisfaction; all the senses are set a-working for it, and yet can never do enough. Ecclesiastes 6:7, “All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.” Many arts and trades are found out to bring this to perfection, though all in vain, and there is no end of these things, which are of no use but to please the flesh, which, like the grave, never says it has enough. 2. Ease, sloth, and quiet, which is a negative kind of sensuality. Luke 12:19, The rich man said, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease.” All to please the flesh. This costs hard labour many times to the soul, many a throw conscience gets for the sake of this idol, what by neglect of duties, what by going over the belly of light to shun what is grieving to the flesh, as if men’s happiness consisted in the quiet enjoyment of themselves.—They labour for satisfaction,

2nd. In the desires of the mind, and pleasures thereof. These, if they terminated on right objects, and were sought in a right manner, it would be well, for our true happiness consists in the soul’s enjoyment of God; but in the natural man all is in confusion. And, 1st, There is much labour in seeking happiness in the pleasures of the judgment. This is the snare of thinking graceless men; this was among the first doors men went to when they turned from God. Genesis 3:5, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” And there is hard labour without a figure, for the punishment of that. Ecclesiastes 1:13, “And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith.” And what comes it to at length? to no rest; for, Ecclesiastes 1:18, “In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” Here is fulfilled, Ecclesiastes 10:15, “The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.” whereas, would they go to Christ, they would be in a fair way to get what they are seeking; for, John 17:3, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Colossians 2:3, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” There is labour, 2nd, In pleasures of the fancy. What else are all the lusts of the eye? all the abundance of the riches for which men labour so much? Ecclesiastes 5:11, “When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?” All they can think or say is, these are mine. What is honor, credit, and the like, but a tickling of our fancy, with the fancies of others about us, adding nothing to real worth? And how busy is the soul often times in that. Ecclesiastes 6:9, “Better is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire; this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.” What satisfaction is sought in imagination sins, lust, revenge, and the like? what restlessness there. 2 Peter 2:14, “Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin.” How busy is the soul oftentimes in imagination, of wealth, and the like, as if, when it had tried all other means in vain, it would try, while awake, to dream itself happy! “The thoughts of my heart,” says Job, Job 17:11, Hebrews the passions of my heart, “are broken off.”

3. The other thing in which natural men labour for rest, is the law; compare the text, Matthew 11:28 with Matthew 11:29-30. Emphatically is that labour described, Romans 10:3, “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness.” Go about; the word signifies, a seeking, like a disputer in the schools, or a tormentor of one upon the rack; to establish, to make it stand itself alone. They seek to make it stand, as men that will have a stone to stand on end, which, at the same time, is ever coming down on them again. Why all this? because it is their own: “Have not submitted.” Christ offers a righteousness; but to take it, is to them a point

of submission, against which they labour, as the untoward bullock against the yoke. They will never let it on till God break the iron sinew of the neck, Isaiah 48:4. To confirm this, consider,

1. All men desire to be happy, and no man can get his conscience quite silenced, more that he can get the notion of a God quite erased from his mind. Romans 2:14-15, “They are a law unto themselves...their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another.” Peace of mind is a natural desire, which none can divest himself of. Hence it follows, men cannot but seek inward peace; and though they may set themselves to murder conscience for that end, yet seeing it will not do for them totally, they do of necessity take some other way. There never was but two ways, either Christ, or the law. The former they reject, therefore it follows, they follow the latter. Let us view this in three sorts of natural men.

(1) In the profane person, who has not so much as a form of godliness; it is hardest to be found in them. But none so profane, but it will readily be found they have some one good thing or another about them, and sometimes they will compliment their consciences with a denial of satisfaction to their lusts, which is a labour so much the harder to them, as they are under the greater power of lusts. This sure they do not with an eye to make themselves miserable, but happy, that their consciences may excuse them, Romans 2:15, Excusing, even those that are most at the devil’s will, are taken captive, as hunters who take their prey alive, 2 Timothy 2:26. Importing still, a conscience labouring in the law, though lusts, as being stronger, do for the most part prevail.—Let us view this,

(2) In the formal natural man: some of whom labour in the duties of morality; others in those of religion; who are at no small travail in the law, if we consider it all for nought. Like the Pharisee, Luke 18:11, they take not the gospel-way, yet they labour in the law. Sure lusts remain in them in their life and vigour. It surely costs labour so far to restrain them.—Let us view this,

(3) In the awakened sinner. I am not for excluding these out of the text, but only that it be not restrained to them. Acts 2:37, “Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” These mend their hands at this hard labour, and oft-times labour so to keep the law, that they are both by themselves, and others taken for saints of the first magnitude, and yet it is but still in the law, till converting grace come, and send them off the old root.

2. It is natural for men to labour in the law for happiness, and therefore, till nature be overcome by grace, men will not be put off it. The law was Adam’s covenant, who, with his children, were to work and win heaven by their works; though they have lost their father’s strength, yet they will keep their father’s trade; though their stock be small, yet they will keep the merchandising for heaven, and give God good works for good wages. See nature speaking out of him, Matthew 19:16, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” And it often happens, that they who have fewest of good works lay the greater stress upon them.

3. Consider how this practice has been formed into principles, in the face of the sun of the gospel. Never was an error yet vented in principle, but in compliance with some corruption of the heart; therefore is that made the characteristic of true doctrine, that it is according to godliness. 1 Timothy 6:3. No sooner was the gospel preached, than Cain sets up for works in opposition to faith. Genesis 4:4-5, “And the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his

offering he had no respect." Paul gives the reason. Hebrews 11:4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." In Abraham's family, to whom the promise of righteousness was more clearly made, Hagar bears her son; compare Galatians 4:24. When the people were in Egypt, the generality of them knew nothing else. They had curtailed the law so very short, as all that labour in it do, that they thought they kept all very well. Romans 5:13, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." For that cause God gave them the law, as in Exodus 20:1-26. Galatians 3:19, "The law was added because of transgressions"; it prevailed in the days of the prophets, in Christ's days, and from the beginning of the Christian church to this day; hence our swarms of Papists, etc.,—Consider,

4. They turn the very gospel into law, as unclean vessels sour the sweetest liquor that is put in them. What a real gospel was the ceremonial law to the Jews, holding up blood, death, and translation of guilt, from them to the substitute, every day before their eyes in their sacrifices! But, Romans 11:9, "Their very table [that is, their altar, so called, Malachi 1:12] became a snare"; and they went about these things, as if by them they would have made up what was wanting in their observation of the moral law. Just so was it turned in Popery; yea, and, alas! among Protestants it is found thus soured, to whom the gospel is the law, and faith, repentance, and new obedience, the fulfilling of the law. But would to God it stood in principles only; but as sure as every unrenewed man is out of Christ, as sure even these natural men, whose heads are set right in this point in their hearts and practice the very gospel is turned into law, and their obedience, their very faith and repentance, such as it is, is put in the room of Christ. For practice, when fairly traced, will show the principles from which it proceeds.

5. Consider, though all would be saved, yet natural men are enemies to the gospel-way of salvation. 1 Corinthians 1:23, "It is to the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." They must then be in love with the law, for there is no mids; yea, so cleave they to it, that nothing but death can part Adam's sons and it, and this even a violent death in a day of God's power, Psalms 110:3, Romans 7:4, "Ye also are become dead to the law;" Greek, deadened, killed, or put to death. As long as a soul sees how to shift without Christ, it will never come to him; add to this, that the godly find the remains of this principle in them to struggle against. Self denial is the first lesson Christ gives, but they are learning it all their days. If it is thus in the green tree, what shall it be in the dry? The nature of the labour of sinners out of Christ, considered, 1st, As it respects their lusts; 2nd, As it respects the law.

First: We are to consider this labour of sinners, as it respects their lusts, their going up and down among the creatures, extracting from them a comfort and pleasures, which they take for happiness. I shall here show the properties of this labour, and thus confirm the point, that they are engaged in a wearisome labour.

1. It is hard labour, and sore toil. Jeremiah 9:5, "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." None win the devil's wages for nought, they eat no idle bread where he is task-master, and they must needs run, whom he drives. The devil's yoke is of all yokes the heaviest. To clear this point, consider, (1) What the Scriptures compare this labour in lusts unto; whereby it will appear hard labour. It compares it, a. To the labour of a man going to a city, and not knowing the way. Ecclesiastes 10:15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth everyone of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." That is hard labour, as many know by experience. Many a weary foot such

must go, many a hardship they must endure, and so must these in pursuit of happiness. It compares it, b. To a labouring in the fire. Habakkuk 2:13, “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” How hard is their labour that lieth about a fire! what sweat! what toil! Jeremiah 6:29. “The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.” But how much more hard in the fire! As when a house is on fire, and men in it, labouring to preserve that which the fire consumes even among their hands. These labour, 1st, In the fire of lusts, that inflames the heart, and scorches the very soul. Proverbs 6:26-27, “For, by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” 2nd, In the fire of divine wrath that is kindled by the former. Isaiah 9:18, “For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.” This consumeth what they are working for in the other; so that when, like the spider, they have spun out their own bowels for a covering, yet it is by far too narrow, and they have but wearied themselves for very vanity. It is compared, c. To labouring under a burden, as in the text itself, which will not let the man get up his back. They are the devil’s drudges, labouring under that load that will crush them at last, if they do not, as in Psalms 55:22, cast their burden on the Lord, that he may sustain them. They are laden with divers lusts, which lie on them as a burden on the weary beast, which weary them indeed, but they are bound on as with bands of iron and brass. It is compared, d. To the labour of a soldier in war; they watch for iniquity as a sentry at his post, Isaiah 29:20. The natural man himself is the very field of battle. James 4:1, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts which war in your members?” The war itself you may see described in the three following verses. Who cannot but be well laboured with the feet of men and horse in that confusion? Though there be not grace and corruption to war in them, there are lusts, and lusts opposed to one another, lusts and light also. It is compared, e. To the labour of the husbandman in ploughing, Hosea 10:13, “Ye have ploughed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity.” They devise wickedness, which the Hebrew calls ploughing it. “Devise not evil against thy neighbour,” Proverbs 3:29, “An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is a burning fire,” Proverbs 16:27. It is compared, f. Not to insist on more, to the labour of a woman in child birth. Psalms 7:14, “Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.” What pangs do raging lusts create to the soul? What cords of death does it straiten with? No small toil at conceiving of sin, and bearing it in the heart, and bringing it forth; but nothing in the abominable brat to satisfy the soul after all.

(2) It is hard labour, if you consider that eminent emblem of our natural state, the Egyptian bondage. Their deliverance out of Egypt was typical of their spiritual deliverance by Christ, and so that must needs signify man’s natural state; concerning which it may be remarked, 1st, that as the children of Israel went down to Egypt in the loins of their parents, so we in Adam. 2nd, As the deliverance was wrought by the angel of the covenant, by the hands of Moses the law giver, and Aaron the priest, so this by the law and the gospel. 3rd, As Pharaoh opposed the children of Israel to the utmost, so the devil opposeth here. Pharaoh was “the great dragon which lieth in the midst of his rivers, which said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself,” Ezekiel 29:3, and was a type of that great red dragon, mentioned in Revelation 12:3, etc. But for that which concerns this point, see Exodus 5:1-23. There you will find persons labouring, and heavy-laden, Exodus

5:4-5. It is hard labour to satisfy lusts, the devil's task-masters. Ephesians 2:2-3, "He worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." The Israelites had their tasks doubled, to put religion out of their heads and hearts, Exodus 5:10. Lusts also must be satisfied, but wherewith to do it is withheld, as straw was from the Israelites, Exodus 5:11. They are scattered up and down among the creatures for it, but can never squeeze out a sufficiency for them, even as the Israelites could not find stubble enough to prepare their bricks, Exodus 5:12-14. If any appearance of deliverance, the labour is made the harder. Says Paul, Romans 7:9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." It is hard labour,

(3) If ye consider the effects this labour hath, 1st, On the souls of men. The minds of men have a toilsome task, where sin is on the throne. Isaiah 5:20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" That soul must needs be in a continual fever, while inordinate affections are in their strength, as in all out of Christ. A fermentation of lusts cannot but make a tossed mind. Anxiety and cares of the world stretch the mind, as on tenter-hooks. A conceived slight, like that of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:4, sets the proud man's heart in a fire of wrath and revenge, and squeezes the sap out of all their enjoyments, as in the instance of Haman, Esther 5:9-13. Envy slays the silly one, lust strikes as a dart through the liver; anger, malice, discontent, and the like, make a man his own executioner; they are tossed between hopes, fears, and vanity, tumbled hither and thither with every wind of temptation, as a ship without either pilot or ballast. 2nd, even the body is oft-times hard put to it in this labour. The covetous rises early, eats the bread of sorrow for what is not; the drunkard uses his body worse than his beast. More bodies have fallen sacrifices to lusts, one way or another, than ever fell by all the hardships either in or about religion.

2. It is base, mean, and abject labour. See Jeremiah 2:21, compared with Jeremiah 2:23-24. Were we to die like beasts, we might live like beasts, with our souls grovelling still downward on the earth. If the soul had been so narrow, as to be satisfied with less than an infinite good, he had not spoke like a fool, who said to his soul, Luke 12:19, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," when his barns were full; in that case, the swine and his soul might have fed together. But we have immortal souls, capable of enjoying an infinite good, and such working in the earth must needs be a base labour for an heaven-born soul, which God breathed into the formed dust, but gave not to be drowned in a mass of flesh and blood, nor to be only as salt, to keep the body a while from rotting.

3. It is a constant labour. The sea rests sometimes, the carnal heart never. Isaiah 57:20, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Lusts are ever craving, never say they have enough; they are rolling the stone to the top of the hill, which still comes down on them again and again, and creates new labour; see Psalms 78:18, Psalms 78:20, Psalms 78:29-30, "And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust. 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? So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust." Two things make it a continual labour. 1st, Continual disappointments. These they cannot miss, seeing there is no satisfaction to be had in the creatures; yet their soul still craves, hence no rest, but are urged on to work again.

Isaiah 57:10, “Thou art weary in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.” Men are like the silly doves without heart, who still go to the same nest where they have been herried never so often before, and will even beg there, where they have got a thousand nay-says. 2nd, What is got in them enlarges the desire, instead of satisfying it; the more that lusts are fed, the more they require to maintain them. Sin is an insatiable tyrant; to labour in its service, is but to cast oil into the flame. The dropsy-thirst can never be quenched.

4. It is vain labour, they can never reach the end of it. Isaiah 55:2, “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” They shall as soon fill a triangle with a circle, as the heart with such things; the grave shall sooner give back its dead, than the lusts of the heart say, It is enough. It is impossible to find satisfaction in these things, for they are not suitable to the soul, more than stones for the nourishment of the body. The body gets its nourishment from the earth, because it is of the earth; the soul is from heaven, and so its satisfaction must come from thence. The things of the world cannot satisfy the soul, because they have no word of divine appointment, to be the staff of that bread which nourishes it; without this, grass could no more satisfy the beasts, nor bread the hunger of man, than sand. Matthew 4:4, “Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” God has kept this as his own prerogative, to satisfy the soul, incommunicable to the creatures conjunctly or separately.

5. It is notwithstanding costly labour; for time that is precious is spent on it, which men should husband well, Ephesians 5:16, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” By time well improved, we might attain true happiness; time once gone can never be recalled. But, ah! what precious hours are cast away on these things, which might be improved in trading for heaven. It is costly, because the gifts of the mind are thrown away on it. Reason makes us differ from the beasts, but by the abuse of it men make themselves worse than the beasts. Jeremiah 8:7, “Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times: and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.” Men’s minds are employed not to know God, but other things; their choice also is not fixed upon Him, their affections are bestowed on other things. Finally, It is costly, because the outward good things of the body, and estate in the world, are bestowed upon it. Health and strength go in the pursuit of vanity, and in the service of their lusts, yea, are sacrificed many times on the altar of intemperance and sensuality. Riches, power, honours, as the feeding of the horse does, make people kick against him who lays these things to their hands. Yea, to crown all, the soul itself is thrown away upon it: Matthew 16:26, “For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Men seeking vanity, lose what is most excellent; and it is dear-bought that is purchased at that rate. I shall now consider what is meant by, Second: A labouring in the law.

1. It is most hard labour, for it requires the most exact obedience, under pain of the curse. Galatians 3:10, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Nothing but perfect obedience is accepted, according to the law; and for the least failure, it dooms the sinner to death. Now, no man can perform this; and yet, so foolish are men, that they think to please God with their works. Again, it is hard, because the law neither promiseth nor giveth strength. God gave Adam strength to perform; he lost it, the law does not restore it; so that in this case they must make the brick, but no straw is laid to their hands. This makes hard

work, and so, by the Spirit, it at length breaks the heart of the elect, and makes them die to the law, as a wife to a rigorous husband, Galatians 2:19.

2. It is a vain and useless labour. There are much pains, and yet no gain, in this labour. It is vain, in respect of the soul thriving; they that labour in the law do but sow their seed in the sand; all they reap is wind, which may puff them up, but cannot nourish. Why so many barren dry professors? but because they are not trading with Christ, but with the law. Men go to duties, and rest in them; the pipe is laid short of the fountain. It is vain, in respect of acceptance with God. It is thankless work, for it supersedes the commandment to believe. John 6:29, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” It is a sad word. Romans 9:31-32, “Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” Turtles were accepted on the altar at Jerusalem, when bullocks were rejected on those at Dan and Bethel.

3. it is vain, in respect of answering the demands of the law, Galatians 3:10. Our curtailed obedience will not answer the measuring reed of the law; it demands satisfaction for what is past, and perfect obedience for what is to come. Finally, it is vain, in respect of salvation. The way to heaven by the first covenant is blocked up; the angel with the flaming sword guards it, Galatians 3:24. O Sirs! duties are a sandy foundation, and great will be the fall of legal professors.

Why sinners labour for Happiness, yet come not to Christ for it.

1. Because they have lost God, the fountain of happiness, and therefore they seek to squeeze it out of the creatures. Ephesians 2:12, “Having no hope, and without God in the world.” For, says God, Jeremiah 2:13, “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters.” The sun is gone down upon them, and therefore they light their candles, and compass themselves with their own sparks; for the empty soul must have something to feed on. The prodigal wanted bread, and therefore fed on husks. Doves’ dung is precious, when there is no bread in Samaria. Sinners labour in these things,

2. Because, by the power of a strong delusion, they still expect satisfaction from them; they are represented in a magnifying glass, as the forbidden fruit was to our first parents, Genesis 3:5-6. That delusion took with them, is conveyed to their posterity, and will never be cured till grace do it. Hence men, though they meet with a thousand disappointments in these things, yet still from new hopes they renew the attempt. Sinners labour thus,

3. Because these things are most suitable to the corrupt nature. Romans 8:5, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.” Fishes swim in the river, and care not for the most pleasant meadow; swine prefer the dunghill to a palace; because every thing seeks its like. Lusts must be nourished with these; even the way of the law, though just and good in itself, is the way that agrees best with self. Romans 3:27, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.” Sinners are engaged in this labour,

4. Because they know no better. Christ is a hidden Christ to men in their natural estate; they see not his glory, fullness, and excellency; they say, as in Song of Solomon 5:9, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved?” The fowl scrapes by the jewels, and takes up a corn beside them, because it knows not their worth. 1 Peter 2:7-8, “Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made

the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient."—Sinners continue this labour, 5. Because men naturally are enemies to the way of salvation by Christ. The sinner earnestly expostulated with.

Why do you spend your labour for that which satisfieth not? I would beseech you, in the most earnest manner, not only to cease from, to give up with, your present unpleasant and unprofitable labour, but also to change your labour; I would have you, not only to depart from evil, but even to do good; I would call upon you to engage in the service of a new Master, and run in the way of his commandments. You are labouring, you must be labouring, one way or other; will you not then engage in the labour of true religion, real godliness? If we must serve, surely it is better to serve Christ than the devil. The labour that there is in religion affrights the world at it; but why should it, seeing their labour is so great while out of Christ? Consider,

1. We are not calling you from idleness to working, but from labour to labour. And even if we were still to be slaves, better be so to God than to the devil. What will men say to Christ at the last day, who will be at pains in their lusts, but be at none in holiness, that will bear a yoke, but not Christ's yoke?

2. We call you, not from one base labour to another, but from a base to an honourable work. Should one be called from the stone-barrow to be a king's cup-bearer, it were not comparable to what is proposed. 1st, They will have a more honourable Master. 2nd, More honourable fellow-labourers, for the angels serve him. 3rd, More honourable work, God himself is glorious in holiness. 4th, A more honourable office; from being slaves to the devil, they are made kings and priests unto God.

3. We call upon you from vain labour, to that which shall be prosperous and successful; you are labouring for happiness there, where you will never get it, but here are full breasts; you are in vain striking at the flinty rock for water, here is an open fountain, where none ever went away disappointed.

4. We call you from a barren labour, where you will get nothing but sorrow to take away with you, to a labour which, when you have finished your works, will follow you, Revelation 14:13. Ah! miserable is your present labour, Isaiah 59:5-6. The spider wastes its bowels to spin its web, and when all is done, one stroke of the besom sweeps all away; it is either killed in its web, or drawn by it as a rope unto death; so that it doth but spin its winding-sheet, or plait the rope for itself. Consider,

5. That the worst which can be made of it is, that religion is hard labour. But this should be no prejudice against it with you, seeing, as has been said, the labour out of Christ is also hard labour. But to cast the balance, observe,

(1) If it is hard labour, it is worth the pains; the other is not so; for, Proverbs 2:4-5, "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." There is hard labour in digging stones, as well as digging for gold; nay, it is hard labour digging disappointments, that which is not; whereas the gain of the other is precious and certain. 1st, The promise, Proverbs 8:21, "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures." 2nd, The experience of all the labourers confirm the certainty of it: "I, God, said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain."

(2) If it is hard labour, it is short; if the work be sore, yet it is not longsome. You shall soon rest from your labours. Revelation 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” He that is tired with his journey, his spirits will revive when near the end. The shadow of the evening makes the labourer work heartily, for loosing-time is at hand. The trials, afflictions, weeping, etc., of the saints, endure but for a moment. On the other hand, the labour of other persons knows no end; no rest abides them, but an everlasting toil under wrath that never ends. 6. We call you from a hard to an easy labour. “My yoke is easy,” Christ has said it, we must believe it. But to clear it, consider for this time, only these two things.

(1) All the difficulties in religion arise from that active corruption which is in men, putting them to labour in their lusts and in the law. Matthew 11:12, “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take if by force.” Violence and force, not with God, He opposeth us not, but with our own corruptions. And in this sense only the Scripture holds out the labour of religion to be hard. But men do not state the matter fairly: Lay a ton-weight upon a rolling-stone, certainly it is harder to roll both together than the stone alone; but is the stone therefore lighter than the ton-weight? Take them separately, and absolutely the labour in religion is easy, the other hard. Men cannot bear Christ’s burden. Why? because they still keep on the devil’s burden, and they cannot bear the one above the other; that is not fair. Lay off the one, take up the other; see which is lightest. A meek and a passionate man, which of them has the hardest task in bearing an affront? the sober man, or the drunkard? the worldly man, or he that lives above the world? The more power grace has, the more easy; the more power lusts have, the more hard is the labour.

(2) There is true help in the one, not in the other. The labour in religion has outward helps; the labourers are not helpless, they have a cloud of witnesses gone before them, whom they may see with their crowns upon their heads, Hebrews 12:1. Ye are not the forlorn in hope. Armies of saints have stormed heaven before you and have left it behind them; that the work is possible, and the reward certain. The other have not this; if they get satisfaction in their lusts, they are the first. They see thousands before them, who have laboured as hard as they, disappointed, and are lain down in sorrow. This labour has inward helps. Christ bears the heaviest part of his own yoke; he gives strength, he works the will for the work; and the work for us, when we have the will. Php 2:13, “For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Isaiah 26:12, “Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” The others have not. True, they have that within them which puts them on to this labour, but the more of the one, the harder is the other, as the wearied beast is goaded by the spur, and worn out by their being beaten when no straw is allowed them. But where is the help to work satisfaction and happiness out of the creatures, or from the law?

7. We call you from a wearisome to a lightsome pleasant labour. I have proved the first; for the last, see Proverbs 3:17, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” But let us hear what can be said for both.

(1) Is there much pleasure in sin? In some there is none. What pleasure has the passionate man, that kindles a fire in his own bosom? What pleasure has the envious, that gnaws himself like a serpent for the good that others enjoy? What pleasure has the discontented, that is his own executioner? Consider the calm of spirit that the contrary graces bring, and judge who has the better part. As for those sins in which pleasure is found, a. It is common to them with these

creatures with whom they will not desire to be ranked. For these things that gratify men's sensual appetite are common to them with beasts, as gluttony, drunkenness, filthiness, etc., A sow can drink, and be as drunk as the greatest drunkard, and so on. And they have the better of them, as being under no law, and therefore, they can go the full length of their appetite. 1st, They do it without remorse. 2nd, They find satisfaction in these things, seeing they are not capable of desiring greater things. Now, put these together, where is the pleasure? Is it not surpassed by the pain? As to the desires of the mind, these are common to them with devils. The greatest swearer, liar, and proud opposer of religion, have the trade but from the second hand. The devil can satisfy this curiosity better than the most curious, reason more closely against religion than any atheist. Only obstinate despisers of reproof and mockers surpass the devil, for the devils believe and tremble; whereas for a time they do not. b. The pleasure is but momentary, the pain follows hard at the heels, and is eternal. What pleasure can be devised, for which a man would hold his finger over a burning candle for a quarter of an hour? how much more dreadful to endure eternal burnings! c. The struggle that conscience makes against corruption, brings more torment than that which corruption makes against grace. Conscience is more dreadfully armed than corruption; There is here as much difference as there is betwixt the hand of God and the hand of the devil. See now what becomes of the pleasure!

(2) The labour in religion is truly pleasant. It is truly holy labour; for of that we speak, and Scripture-testimony proves its pleasantness; see Proverbs 3:17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Ask David, and he will tell you, in Psalms 84:1-12. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:10. a. It is a labour suited to the nature of the soul, the better part, their divine supernatural nature, 2 Peter 1:4. Believers are partakers of a divine nature. This must needs create ease and delight; the stream easily flows from the fountain; birds with pleasure fly in the air. The reason of the difficulty in religion to many is, they are out of their element when engaged in it. b. Therein the soul carries on a trade with heaven; entertains communion with God, through the Spirit of Christ, by a mutual intercourse of grace and duty, the soul receiving influences, and returning them again in duties; as the rain falls on the earth freely, so the waters run freely toward the sea again. c. Great peace of conscience usually attends this; and the more labour, the more peace. Psalms 119:165, "Great peace have they who love thy law." Here is a feast which nothing but sin mars. 2 Corinthians 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this, 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." Men cannot take it from us, John 14:27. d. Sometimes they have great manifestations of Christ, evidences of the Lord's love raising a high spring-tide of joy in their souls, greater than that which the whole congregation of the world enjoys, Psalms 4:6-7. It is joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Peter 1:8. e. It is a lightsome way they walk in, whereas the other is darksome; the light of the Lord's word shines in it. The Mahometans have a tradition, that Moses' law and Christ's gospel were written first with ink made of pure light. Sure the Scripture points out duty, as if it were written with a sun-beam.

8. We call you from a labour against yourselves, to a labour for your advantage. Ye must either do the work of God or the devil. Every sin is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new stone laid on the wall of separation. What a mad thing is it to be working out our damnation, instead of our own salvation!

9. We call you not to more, but to other labour. We are all laborious creatures; the greatest idler is in some sort busy. Paul calls even them that work not at all, busy bodies, 2 Thessalonians 3:11. Our life is nothing but a continual succession of actions, even as the fire is ever burning, and the rivers running. It is in some respect impossible to do more than we do; the watch runs as fast when wrong as when right. Why may we not then keep the highway while we are travelling.—Consider,

10. That the same pains that men are at to ruin themselves, might possibly serve to save them. There are difficulties in the way of sin as well as of religion. Does not sin oftentimes bereave men of their nights' rest? Are they more disturbed when communing with their own souls, and with God? Do not men draw sin as with cart-ropes? Isaiah 5:18. Why might not labour be employed in drawing the heart to God? If men would but change, and suck as greedily and incessantly at the breasts of God's consolations, as they do of the creature's, how happy would they be!

11. Consider that the labour in religion is not greater, nay, it is less than in sin, for religion contracts our work to one thing. Luke 10:41-42, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." Sinners have many lusts to please, the saints have but one God to please; the work of religion is all of a piece, sin not so. There is a sweet harmony betwixt all the graces and all the duties of religion. But lusts are quite contrary; and as they war against grace, so against one another. James 4:1, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not from hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" So that the sinner is dragged by one lust one way, by another, another. And how hard is it to serve contrary masters!

Christless sinners under a heavy burden.

1. Observe, that Satan has a load on all out of Christ; it is a load of sin. Isaiah 1:4, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." This load is twofold,

1st, A load of guilt, Genesis 4:13, "And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear," (Heb. sin) Guilt is the heaviest load ever was on the shoulders of men or angels. The Scriptures hold it forth,

(1) As debt. He that is in debt is under a burden. It is the worst of debts, we cannot pay it, nor escape the hands of our creditor; yea, we deny the debt, care not for count and reckoning, we wave our creditor as much as we can; so it stands uncancelled. But it is a debt that must be paid. 2 Thessalonians 1:9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." They shall pay what justice demands. It is represented,

(2) As a yoke tied fast on the sinner's neck; hence pardon is called a loosing of it, guilt being, as it were, cords of wrath, whereby the sinner is bound over to God's wrath. Pardon is also called remission or relaxation. Romans 3:25, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—It is pointed out,

(3) As a burden. Hosea 14:2, "Take away all iniquity." Take away, namely, as a burden off a man's back. Hence Christ is said to have borne our sins, the burden of the elect's guilt being laid on his back. What a heavy load is it! 1st, It makes the whole creation groan, Romans 8:22. It caused them to take their pains five thousand years since, and they are not yet delivered of their burden. All the groans that ever men gave on earth and in hell were under this burden; it sunk the whole world into ruin: "Christ took our nature," to prevent us going down to the pit. Hebrews 2:16. (Greek,

caught hold), as of a drowning man, not of the whole seed of Adam, for great part of it fell to the ground, but of the seed of Abraham, the elect. 2nd, This load sunk the fallen angels, made them fall as stars from heaven to the bottomless pit. And what a load was it to Christ, that made him sweat as it were great drops of blood, that made him groan and die! It is,

2ndly, A load of servitude to lusts, which of themselves are heavy burdens; the very remainder of which made the apostle groan. Romans 7:24, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” What greater burden can be, than for a man to have a swarm of unmortified corruptions hanging about him, whose cravings he is still obliged to answer. This is that which creates that weary labour, of which we have already spoken; better a man were burdened with serpents sticking in his flesh, than with these. I observe, 2. The law has a load on the Christless sinner; and that,

(1) A load of duties, as great and numerous as the commandment, which is exceeding broad, can lay on. Though they perform them not, yet they are bound upon them by the commandment; and they shall sooner dissolve the whole fabric of the world, than make void this commandment. This is a heavy load. True, they that are in Christ have a yoke of duties laid on them, but not by the law, but by Christ. The difference is great; the law exacts perfect obedience, but gives no strength; Christ, when claiming obedience to his law, gives strength for the performance, which makes it an easy obedience. There is,

(2) A load of curses. Galatians 3:10, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.” Every commandment of the law is fenced with a curse, denounced against the breakers of it. How great must be the load, then, where every action is a sin, and every sin brings a curse! This is a heavy load, that makes the earth reel to and fro, like a drunkard, under the weight of it. I observe,

3. That God has a load on the Christless sinner, that is, of wrath. Ephesians 2:3, “And were by nature children of wrath.” This is an abiding load. John 3:36, “He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” This load is far heavier than mountains of brass; it is weightier than can be expressed. The nature of coming to Christ explained. To come to Christ is to believe on him; John 6:35, “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Unbelief is the soul’s departing, not from a living law, but from the living God, Hebrews 3:12. Christ is the Lord, God is in him, he calls sinners to come to him; faith answers the call, and so brings back the soul to God in Christ. Now, the Scripture holds forth Christ many ways answering to this notion of coming to him by faith. And that you may see your privilege and call, I shall hold forth some of these to you,

1. The devil’s drudges and burden-bearers are welcome to Christ, as the great gift of the Father to sinners, to come and take it. John 3:16, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” The world was broken by Adam; God sends Christ as an up-making gift, and the worst of you are welcome to him, yea, he bodes (urges) himself upon you. Come to him, then, ye broken impoverished souls, that have nothing left you but poverty, wants, and debt.—Such are to come to him,

2. As the great Physician of souls. Matthew 9:12, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Christ in the gospel comes into the world as to an hospital of sin-sick souls,

ready to administer a cure to those that will come to him for it. Our diseases are many, all of them deadly, but he is willing and able to cure them all. He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, and says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else,” Isaiah 45:22.—Such should come to him,

3. As the satisfying food of the soul. Isaiah 55:1-3, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” The soul is an empty thing, and has hungry and thirsty desires to be satisfied; the creatures cannot satisfy; Christ can. John 6:55, “My flesh, says he, is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” God has made a feast of fat things in Christ, in him all the cravings of the soul may be satisfied; there are no angels to guard the tree of life; no seal on this fountain. Zechariah 13:1, “In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” There is no enclosure about this flower of glory, Song of Solomon 2:1. Here is the carcass; where are the eagles that should gather together? Such come to Christ,

4. As one on whom they may rest. Song of Solomon 8:5, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?” We are not able to do our own turn, but on him we should rely. 2 Chronicles 16:8, “Because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered thine enemies into thine hand.” Guilt makes the mind to be in a fluctuating condition. By coming to Jesus we are stayed, as is a ship at anchor. In, or from ourselves, we have nothing for justification and sanctification. God has laid help upon one that is mighty; the weary soul is welcome to rest in him.—Such come to him,

5. As one on whom they may cast their burdens. Psalms 55:22, “Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.” The soul is heavy-laden while out of Christ; Jesus holds forth the everlasting arms, Deuteronomy 33:27, faith settles down on them, casting the soul’s burden upon them; “Come, says he, with all your misery, debts, beggary, and wants, I have shoulders to bear them all; I will take on the burden, ye shall get rest.” He is content to marry the poor widow. Such come to him,

6. As one in whom they may find refuge. Hebrews 6:18, “Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.” The law, as the avenger of blood, pursues the soul. Christ is that city of refuge, where none can have power against them. The gates are never shut; here is a refuge from the law, from justice, and from the revenging wrath of God. Here is shelter under the wings of Christ: how willing is he to gather his people, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! Such come to him,

7. As one in whom the soul may at length find rest. Psalms 37:7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.” The soul out of Christ is in a restless state, still shifting from one creature to another, not finding content in any. But by coming to Christ, the soul takes up its eternal rest in him, and he becomes a covering of the eyes to it. We are like men in a fever, still changing beds; like the dove out of the ark, we have no rest, till we come to Christ. Such come to Christ,

8. As a husband. Matthew 22:4, “All things are ready, come unto the marriage.” Your maker is content to be your husband, Psalms 45:10. Ministers are sent, as Abraham’s servant, to seek a spouse for Christ. He is willing to match with the worst, the meanest of you; he seeks no dowry; he is the richest, the most honourable, the most tender and loving husband. Such come to Christ,

9. As a powerful deliverer. Christ stands at our prison-doors, as in Isaiah 61:1, “proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. All who come to him, as in 2 Corinthians 8:5, first give their own selves unto the Lord. Whosoever will come to Jesus, must give up themselves to him. It is the work of faith to give up the soul to Christ, that he may save it, that he may open the prison-doors, take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive.

Several things imported in our Lord’s kind Invitation to Sinners.

1. It imports that sinners are welcome to come to Christ, that they may unite with God by him; Christ is ready to receive you on your coming.—As to this, consider,

(1) Christ has made a long journey to meet with sinners. What brought him out of the Father’s bosom into the world, but to bring sinners to himself, and so back to God again? What was the errand of the great shepherd, but to seek them, even them that were straying on the mountains of vanity? Luke 19:10, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Consider,

(2) How dear it cost him to purchase your union with God by him. 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made Him, to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Though ye should little value his blood, he will not undervalue it himself; for sinners it was shed, and will he not welcome the reward of it, the fruit of the travail of his soul? Why were his arms stretched on a cross, and his side pierced through, but that he might open up our way to God? Consider,

(3) How near lost sinners lay to Christ’s heart, that he would refuse no hardship, in order that he might see the travail of his soul. His love was ancient love; from eternity, “his delights were with the sons of men,” Proverbs 8:31; see his choice, Hebrews 12:2; and therefore, when he was to suffer, his heart was upon the work. Luke 12:50, “I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” Jacob’s love to Rachel showed itself by his long service for her, which seemed to him but a few days. Consider,

(4) Why has he set up a ministry in the world, but to bring sinners to himself? Matthew 22:3, “And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding.” He would not have left ambassadors to treat with sinners in his name, if he were not willing to receive them, nay, were he not anxious that they should come to him. Consider,

(5) He heartily invites you to come to him; as in the text; in Isaiah 55:1, “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price;” and in Revelation 3:20, “Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” These invitations look not like one who cares not whether sinners come or not, far less like one who is not willing to receive them. Consider,

(6) The earnestness of the invitations; he deals with sinners as one that will not take a nay-say. Luke 14:23, “Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” He not only knocks, but stands and knocks: strives with sinners by his word, his providences, and the motions of his Spirit; answers their objections, Isaiah 55:1, and downwards; while none can refuse, but those that rush wilfully on in their ruin; as in Ezekiel 33:11, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your wicked ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Consider,

(7) How he complains of these that will not come, John 5:40, “And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” He speaks as one that has been working in vain. Isaiah 49:4, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain.” He complains of Jerusalem, Matthew 23:37; yea, he weeps over obstinate incorrigible sinners, Luke 19:41-42, “And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Sure he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven; they flow out as freely and tenderly as ever. Consider,

(8) He commands sinners to come to him. The invitations are all commands; they are most peremptory. 1 John 3:23, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.” If you do it not, you can do nothing that will please him. John 6:29, “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.” And he leaves it on us with the most dreadful certification. Mark 16:16, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” And hence it follows, that the hearers of the gospel who perish, are inexcusable; the door was open, but they would not enter in.—The invitation imports,

2. That the worst of sinners are welcome to Christ. However great their burden of sin and misery be, it is no hinderance in their way to come to Christ. Where all are invited, none are excluded. But upon this I do not enlarge here. All that I shall just now observe is, that this consideration should shame you out of your slighting of Christ, and strike at the root of that bitter despair which lodges in the breasts of many, who are yet far enough from absolute despair of their case. The invitation imports,

3. That Christ allows sinners to come to him, rather on account of the desperateness of their case, than otherwise: Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden. As if he had said, “Ye have been labouring, and yet can get no rest; let that engage you to come to me. Sit down, and consider your case, if nothing else will prevail with you, let the desperateness of your disease bring you to the great Physician.” You are cordially welcome to do so. For, consider,

(1) That it is for this very end God discovers the worst of a man’s case to himself, drives him to his wit’s end, in order that he may begin to be wise. Hosea 2:6-7, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths...then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.” Consider,

(2) That Christ has made offers of himself to those in the worst of cases. Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And he holds out himself as a Saviour in particular for these, Revelation 3:17-18; Isaiah 55:7. Consider,

(3) Such have been made welcome, who have employed such arguments with him. Psalms 25:11, “For thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is very great;” and also in the case of the Canaanitish woman with Jesus, Matthew 15:26-28, “But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” Consider,

(4) He has the more glory, the more desperate that the case is; none see the stars so well as from the bottom of a deep pit. His power is the greater to pardon, his grace to overcome, when there is most occasion for these being displayed; it is the worst of diseases that do best proclaim the physician’s skill, when a cure is effected. From what has been just now observed, we may see and admire the divine condescension, that Christ is so willing to take the sinner in, when he sees himself cast out at all doors, can get rest nowhere else; that he will give him rest, and embrace the sinner, when he sees he can do no better, when he can make no other shift. Hence also learn, how to make an excellent use of the badness of your case, even to take up these stumbling blocks, and break up heaven’s door with them; to make a virtue of necessity, and the more that the burden presseth, the more readily to go to Christ with it. True, it is never right coming to Christ, which sense of misery alone produceth; but love may thus crown a work, which terror begins, and which when from the Holy Spirit it leads to. In a word, you are absolutely inexcusable that come not to Christ, be your case what it will. The nature of that rest which Christ graciously promises, and actually gives, to weary and heavy-laden sinners.

Here it must be observed, that there is a rest which they may have in Christ; a rest here, and a rest hereafter. In this life there is a fourfold rest to be had in Christ. A rest, 1. In respect of sin. The rest Christ gives from sin is twofold.

(1) A rest from the guilt of sin. Guilt is a poison infecting the conscience, which makes it so to smart that it can get no rest, as in the case of Cain and Judas, and also with those, Acts 2:37, “They were pricked in their hearts.” This, when it festers and becomes immovable, is the gnawing worm in hell. Christ gives rest from it, Hebrews 9:14; his blood purges the conscience from dead works. The conscience, when like the raging sea, is stilled by him. Isaiah 57:18-19, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.” The soul finds this rest in the wounds of Christ, for, “by his stripes we are healed,” Isaiah 53:5. The blood of Jesus Christ, Gods own Son, cleanses from all sin. The soul dipped in this fountain is washed from this poison, and is delivered from this sting of guilt. There is rest,

(2) From the reigning power of sin. Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Sin on the throne makes a confused restless soul, like the raging sea, continually casting out mire and dirt. Christ, by his Spirit’s efficacy, turns sin off the throne, and restores rest to the soul. He casts down these Egyptian task-masters, and thus the soul enters into his rest. Hebrews 4:10, “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” In the day of the soul’s coming to Christ, he acts like a king, setting all in order in the kingdom, that was a mere heap of confusion before his accession to the throne. There is in Christ,

2. Rest from the law; not that he makes them lawless, but that he takes off from them the insupportable yoke of the law, and gives them ease. He does so,

(1) From the burden of law-duties, which are exacted in all perfection, under the pain of the curse, while no strength is furnished wherewith to fulfil them. Romans 7:4, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” This is the yoke on all men’s necks naturally; Christ put his neck in this yoke, and bare it, satisfying the law’s demands completely, and so frees all that come to him from this service. Christ carries his people without the dominions of the law. He does so,

(2) From the curse of the law. Galatians 3:13, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us.” Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” These that come to him, he takes from off them that curse which they are under, and gives them his blessing, which he hath merited; carries them from mount Sinai to mount Zion, where they hear the blood of Jesus speaking peace, silencing the demands of vengeance, and affording a refuge for the oppressed. There is in Christ,

3. Rest from that weary labour in which persons are engaged when in quest of happiness, leading the soul to the enjoyment of God. Psalms 116:7, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” The soul, restless in seeking happiness among the creatures, he leads to God, the fountain of all perfection, opening their eyes, as he did Hagar’s, to see the well, and bringing them into the enjoyment of all good in him, uniting the soul with himself; where,

(1) The soul finds a rest of satisfaction from Christ, which it can find in no other quarter whatever, for the soul finds a rest of satisfaction from him, when by faith it is set on the breasts of his consolations. In these there is an object adequate to all the desires of the soul, answering all its needs; thus, Proverbs 14:14, “A good man shall be satisfied from himself.” There is the triumph of faith in the enjoyment of God. Php 4:18, “But I have all, and abound.” The soul finds,

(2) A rest in him of settled abode, insomuch that the soul goes not abroad, as it was wont, among the creatures for satisfaction. 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 to everlasting life.” Christ becomes precious to the soul. Like the released lady, that did not so much as look on or take notice of Cyrus, notwithstanding of the noble part he acted, but on him (her husband) who said, he would redeem her with his own life. Matthew 13:44, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” There is in Christ, 4. Rest in respect of troubles. Christ gives rest,

(1) From troubles in the world, now and then, when he sees meet. Psalms 34:19, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.” Zion’s God reigneth, be on the throne who will; and when he speaks peace, neither devils nor men can create his people trouble; for, Lamentations 3:37, “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” There is no such security from trouble as the godly have, but that is from heaven, and not from earth. Therefore,

(2) Christ gives rest in trouble. John 16:33, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome

the world." You may, nay, you shall meet with troubles, but he can make you get sweet rest in your souls; even when you are on a bed of thorns as to the outward man, he can give his people a sweet rest even in troubles. How can these things be? may some say. In answer, a. Christ gives his people in trouble an inward rest, that is, an inward tranquility of mind in midst of trouble. Psalms 3:1-5, "Lord! how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." Christ can make the believer as a vessel on water tossed here and there, yet not jumbled. There was a greater calm with the three children in the furnace, than with the king in the palace, Daniel 3:24. Fear may be on every side where there is none in the centre, because Christ makes a blessed calm in their hearts. Christ gives in trouble, b. A rest of contentment. "I have learned [says Paul, Php 4:11], in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." This is not only the duty, but the privilege of believers. If the lot of the godly be not brought up to their spirit, Christ will bring their spirit down to their lot; and there must needs be rest there, where the spirit of the man and his lot meet in one. Psalms 37:19, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Then follows, c. A rest of satisfaction in the enjoyment of better things. What though the world hath a bitter taste in their mouths? Christ can hold a cup of consolation to them in that very instant, the sweetness of which will master the bitterness of the other. "Your sorrow, [says he, John 16:20] shall be turned into joy." Paul says, 2 Corinthians 1:12, "Our rejoicing is this, 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." They are not indeed stocks, to be unmoved with troubles, but their sorrow is so drowned in spiritual joy, that it is but as sorrow, 2 Corinthians 6:10, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" even as the joy of the wicked is but as joy. Troubles may raise a mutiny of lusts within, but the peace of God quells them: Php 4:7, "It keeps their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." Christ gives, d. A rest in confidence of a blessed issue. 2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The soul in Christ has the promise to rest on; and however dark a side the cloud may have, faith will see through it; though they may sink deep, they will never drown, who have a promise to bear them up. Thus, you see, they rest in Christ in trouble; and this rest is a most secure rest, where people may rest confidently. Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." The wicked may have rest, but not with God's good will; therefore the more rest, the more dangerous is their case. 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as a woman in travail, and they shall not escape." But there is perfect security in Christ, and that in the worst of times, Song of Solomon 3:7-8. Again, it is a rest so rooted, that the soul can never be deprived of it. Isaiah 32:17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." How soon is the rest of the wicked broken, their candle put out! But this, although it may meet with some disturbance by temptations, as the clouds may go over the sun, yet it shall be as sure as the sun fixed in the firmament; it will be proof against the disturbances of the world, against the temptations and accusations of the devil; yea, against the demands of justice, and the threatenings of the law. Then in the life to come, he will give them all complete rest who come to

him. Hebrews 4:9, “There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God.” He will give their bodies rest in the grave, Isaiah 57:2, and both soul and body rest in heaven hereafter; and that is a rest beyond expression.

If it should be enquired, Who is it that gives this rest? this is answered in our text; Christ says to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, and he is able to make good his word, I will give you rest. The gift of this rest is his prerogative; they that obtain it must get it out of his hands. For illustrating and confirming this, consider,

1. That all creatures cannot give rest to a restless soul. Not any thing in them, or the whole of what can be afforded from them, can give it. Ecclesiastes 1:2, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Men, the best of men, cannot do it. Ministers may be directed to speak a word in season, but the Lord himself can only make that word effectual, 2 Samuel 12:13, compare with Psalms 51:1-19. Nay, angels cannot do it, Exodus 33:2, compare Exodus 33:15. It requires a creating power. Isaiah 57:18, “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.” Consider,

2. There can be no rest to the soul without returning to a reconciled God, for it is impossible the soul can find true rest elsewhere; and there is no returning to God but by Christ. John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He is the only ladder by which the soul can ascend to heaven.

3. Christ is the great Lord Treasurer of heaven. The fullness of power is lodged in him. Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” There is nothing that any can get from heaven but what comes through his hands: John 5:22, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Jesus also hath the keys of hell and death, Revelation 1:18.

4. He is the store-house, where the treasure is laid up, and out of which all needful supplies come: John 1:16, “And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Consider,

5. The glorious types illustrating this: Joseph, Genesis 41:40-44; Joshua that brought the people to the rest in Canaan. Consider,

6. That high character which he sustains: Hebrews 12:2, “He is the author and finisher of our faith.” Consider,

7. It is reasonable it should be so: He hath purchased this rest with his blood; and therefore there is an high propriety that he should be the giver, the dispenser of this glorious blessing.

FOOTNOTE:

*The doctrine of the Gospel is preached not for mere amusement to the understandings of those who hear it. It is preached as the word of salvation sent unto them; as the Gospel of their salvation, as the salvation of God, sent unto the Gentiles. And in this public dispensation of the Gospel, there is made to all the hearers of it, immediately and equally, a most gracious offer of Christ and all his salvation; with a most gracious call unto them, for their receiving and resting upon him accordingly.

—Gibb’s Sacred Contemplations.

“Mis-spend not your time, as many do, in poring upon your hearts, to find whether you be good enough to trust on Christ for your salvation, or to find whether you have any faith, before you dare

be so bold, as to act faith in Christ. But know, that though you cannot find that you have any faith or holiness, yet, if you will now believe on him that justifieth the ungodly, it shall be accounted to you for righteousness," Romans 4:5.

—Walter Marshall on Sanctification.

Chapter 99

S. God Alone Created the World

God Alone Created the World by Thomas Boston This will be evident from the following considerations:

1. The world could not make itself; for that would imply a horrible contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing has no existence, so it have no operation. There must therefore be something which has existence in itself, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if any thing made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a created thing.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused jumble of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in extent, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the particular glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, Isaiah 44:24, "I am the LORD, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by myself." Isaiah 45:12, "I have made the earth, And created man on it. I; My hands; stretched out the heavens, And all their host I have commanded." Isaiah 40:12-13, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as his counselor has taught him?" Job 9:8, "He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea." These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed every thing of the kind that has been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity. By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shows himself to be the true God. Jeremiah 10:11 "Thus you shall say to them: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, And has stretched out the

heavens at His discretion." Psalms 96:5, " All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens." Isaiah 37:16, "You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth." None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united. This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in Scripture as the Creator, 1 Corinthians 7:6, "The Father, of whom are all things." The same claim belongs to the Son, John 1:3, "All things were made by him," [that is to say-] the Word, the Son; John 1:3 "All things were made through Him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." The same honour belongs to the Holy Spirit, as Job 26:13, "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens." Job 33:4 "The Spirit of God has made me," says Elihu, "and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator; and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit are excluded; but because as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be considered in this way: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority: "He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."-In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For, "the Father created all things by Jesus Christ," Ephesians 3:9. And we are told, that "all things were made through him," John 1:3. This work in regard of settlement and ornament, particularly belongs to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, Genesis 1:2, "and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters," to embellish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. This is why it is also said, Job 26:13 "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens."

S. How We Ought to Think about God's Providence

How We Ought to Think about God’s Providence by Thomas Boston

1. Beware of drawing an excuse for your sin from the providence of God; for it is most holy, and is in no way any cause of any sin you commit. Every sin is an act of rebellion against God; a breach of his holy law, and deserves his wrath and curse; and therefore cannot be authorised by an infinitely-holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without detestation and abhorrence. Though he has by a permissive decree allowed moral evil to be in the world, yet that has no influence on the sinner to commit it. For it is not the fulfilling of God’s decree, which is an absolute secret to every mortal, but the gratification of their own lusts and perverse inclinations, that men intend and mind in the commission of sin.

2. Beware of murmuring and fretting under any dispensations of providence that you meet with; remembering that nothing falls out without a wise and holy providence, which knows best what is fit and proper for you. And in all cases, even in the middle of the most afflicting incidents that happen to you, learn submission to the will of God, as Job did, when he said upon the end of a series of the heaviest calamities that happened to him, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," Job 1:21. In the most distressing case, say with the disciples, "The will of the Lord be done," Acts 21:14.

3. Beware of anxious cares and fearfulness about your material well-being in the world. This our Lord has cautioned his followers against, Matthew 6:31. "Take no thought, (that is, anxious and perplexing thought,) saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Never let the fear of man stop you from duty, Matthew 10:28-29; but let your souls learn to trust in God, who guides and superintends all the events and administrations of providence, by whatever hands they are performed.

4. Do not think little of means, seeing God works by them; and he that has appointed the end, orders the means necessary for gaining the end. Do not rely upon means, for they can do nothing without God, Matthew 4:4. Do not despair if there be no means, for God can work without them, as well as with them; Hosea 1:7. "I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." If the means be unlikely, he can work above them, Romans 4:19. "He considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb." If the means be contrary, he can work by contrary means, as he saved Jonah by the whale that devoured him. That fish swallowed up the prophet, but by the direction of providence, it vomited him out upon dry land.

Lastly, Happy is the people whose God is the Lord: for all things shall work together for their good. They may sit secure in exercising faith upon God, come what will. They have good reason for prayer; for God is a prayer-hearing God, and will be enquired of by his people as to all their concerns in the world. And they have ground for the greatest encouragement and comfort in the middle of all the events of providence, seeing they are managed by their covenant God and

gracious friend, who will never neglect or overlook his dear people, and whatever concerns them. For he has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Hebrews 13:5.

S. How the Spirit Enables Us to Pray

How the Spirit Enables Us to Pray by Thomas Boston

It is by the help of the Holy Spirit that we are able to pray, Galatians 4:6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Romans 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

There Are Two Sorts of Prayers.

Firstly, A prayer wrought out by virtue of a gift of knowledge and utterance. This is bestowed on many reprobates, and that gift may be useful to others, and to the church. But as it is merely of that sort, it is not accepted, nor does Christ put it in before the Father for acceptance.

For, secondly, There is a prayer wrought in men by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication," and that is the only acceptable prayer to God. James 5:16, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." The word "effective" is from the Greek word "inwrought." Right praying is praying in the Spirit. It is a gale blowing from heaven, the breathing of the Spirit in the saints, that carries them out in the prayer, and which comes the length of the throne.

Spirit Helps Us to Pray Two Ways

1. As a teaching and instructing Spirit, furnishing proper matter of prayer, causing us to know what we pray for, Romans 8:26, enlightening the mind in the knowledge of our needs, and those of others. The Spirit brings into our remembrance these things, suggesting them to us according to the word, together with the promises of God, on which prayer is grounded, John 14:26,"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." Hence it is that the saints are sometimes carried out in prayer for things which they had no view of before, and carried by some things they had.

2. As a quickening, exciting Spirit, Romans 8:26.; the Spirit qualifying the soul with praying graces and affections, working in the praying person sense of needs, faith, fervency, humility, etc. Psalms 10:17, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear," The man may go to his knees in a very unprepared attitude for prayer, yet the Spirit blows, he is helped. It is for this reason the Spirit is said to make intercession for us, namely, in so far as he teaches and quickens, puts us in a praying frame of mind, and draws out our petitions, as it were, which the Mediator presents.

Special Giftedness in Prayer? This praying with the help of the Spirit is particular to the saints, James 5:16.; yet they do not have that help at all times, nor always in the same measure; for sometimes the Spirit, being provoked, departs, and they are left in a withered condition. So there is great need to look for a breathing, and pant for it, when we are to go to duty: for if there be not a gale, we will tug at the oars but heartlessly.

Let no man think that a readiness and flowing of expression in prayer, is always the effect of the Spirit's assistance. For that may be the product of a gift, and of the common operations of the Spirit, removing the impediment of the exercise of it. And it is evident one may be scarce of words, and have groans instead of them, while the Spirit helps him to pray, Romans 8:26. Neither is every flood of emotions in prayer, the effect of the Spirit of prayer. There are of those which puff up a man, but make him never a whit more holy, tender in his walk, etc. But the influences of the Spirit never miss to be humbling but sanctifying. Hence, says David, "But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You," 1 Chronicles 29:14; and, says the apostle, "We have no confidence in the flesh," Php 3:3.

S. Important Lessons Drawn from the Decrees of God

Important Lessons Drawn from the Decrees of God by Thomas Boston

1. Has God decreed all things that come to pass? Then there is nothing that falls out by chance, nor are we to ascribe what we meet with either to good or bad luck and fortune. There are many events in the world which men look upon as mere accidents, yet all these come by the counsel and appointment of Heaven. Solomon tells us, Proverbs 16:33. that "the lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD." However disordered and fortuitous things may be with respect to us, yet they are all determined and directed by the Lord. When that man drew a bow at random, 1 Kings 22:34, it was merely accidental with respect to him, yet it was God that guided the motion of the arrow so as to strike the king of Israel rather than any other man. Nothing then comes to pass, however random and uncertain it may seem to be, but what was decreed by God.

2. Hence we see God’s certain knowledge of all things that happen in the world, seeing his knowledge is founded on his decree. As he sees all things possible in the telescope of his own power, so he sees all things to come in the telescope of his own will; of his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; and of his permitting will, if he hath decreed to allow them. Therefore his declaration of things to come is founded on his appointing them Isaiah 44:7, "And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them." He foreknows the most necessary things according to the course of nature, because he decreed that such effects should proceed from and necessarily follow such and such causes: and he knows all future contingents, all things which shall happen by "chance," and the most free actions of rational creatures, because he decreed that such things should come to pass contingently or freely, according to the nature of second causes. So that what is casual or contingent with respect to us, is certain and necessary in regard of God.

3. Whoever may be the instruments of any good to us, of whatever sort, we must look above them, and see the hand and counsel of God in it, which is their first source, and be duly thankful to God for it. And whatever evil of suffering or afflictions befall us, we must look above the instruments of it to God. Affliction does not rise out of the dust, or come to men by chance; but it is the Lord that sends it, and we should recognise and reverence his hand in it. This is what David did in the day of his extreme distress; 2 Samuel 16:11 "Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him." We should be patient under whatever distress comes upon us, considering that God is on our side, Job 2:10 "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" This would be a happy means to quiet our complaining at adverse dispensations. Hence David says, "I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was you who did it," Psalms 39:9

4. See here the evil of murmuring and complaining at our lot in the world. How apt are you to quarrel with God, as if he were in the wrong to you, when his dealings with you are not according to your own desires and wishes? You demand a reason, and call God to an account, Why did this

happen to me? Why am I so much afflicted and distressed? Why am I so long afflicted? And why such an affliction rather than another? Why am I so poor and another so rich? Thus your hearts rise up against God. But you should remember, that this is to defame the counsels of infinite wisdom, as if God had not ordered your affairs wisely enough in his eternal counsel. We find the Lord reproving Job for this, Job 40:2 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him?" When you murmur and brood under cross and afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove him as if he were in the wrong. Indeed, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it, as if you had more wisdom and justice to arrange your circumstances, and to carve out your own portion in the world. This is what you really mean when you say, "If I been on God's counsel, I would have ordered this matter better; things would not be with me as they are now." Oh presume not to correct the infinite wisdom of God, seeing he has decreed all things most wisely and judiciously.

5. There is no reason for people to excuse their sins and failing, from the doctrine of the divine decrees. Wicked men, when they commit some wicked or atrocious crime, might attempt to excuse themselves, saying, "Who can help it? God would have it so; it was appointed for me before I was born, so that I could not avoid it." This is a horrid abuse of the divine decrees, as if they might constrain men to sin. This is impossible. The decree is an immanent act of God, and so can have no influence, physical or moral, upon the wills of men, but leaves them to the liberty and free choice of their own hearts; and what sinners do, they do most freely and of their own choice. It is a horrid and detestable wickedness to cast the blame of your sin upon God's decree. This is to charge your villainy upon him, as if he were the author of it. It is great folly to cast your sins upon Satan who tempted you, or upon your neighbour who provoked you: but it is a far greater sin, nay, horrid blasphemy, to cast it upon God himself. A greater affront than this cannot be offered to the infinite holiness of God.

6. Let the people of God comfort themselves in all cases by this doctrine of the divine decrees; and, amidst whatever befalls them, rest quietly and submissively in the bosom of God, considering that whatever comes or can come to pass, proceeds from the decree of their gracious friend and reconciled Father, who knows what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. O what a sweet and pleasant life would you have under the heaviest pressures of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquillity of mind would you enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how no matter how sharp it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of his will!

Chapter 103

S. Man's Utter Inability to Rescue Himself

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

John 6:44

We have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration; namely, his utter inability to recover himself, the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability, that he may see an absolute need of Christ and of the power of His grace. A man that is fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it, but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others. Likewise an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state, but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Saviour. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways; not the first way, for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, 'we were without strength,' unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath, yet 'without strength,' unable to stand under it; and unable to throw it off, or get from under it: so that all mankind would have undoubtedly perished, had not 'Christ died for the ungodly,' and brought help to those who could never have recovered themselves. But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No, the second text tells, they cannot; 'No man can come unto me,' that is, believe in me (John 6:44), 'except the Father draw him.' This is a drawing which enables them to come, who till then could not come; and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered. It is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than 'hearing and learning of the Father,' which, whoever partakes of, come to Christ (John 6:45). Therefore it is not drawing in the way of mere moral suasion, which may be, yea, and always is ineffectual. But it is drawing by mighty power (Ephesians 1:9), absolutely necessary for those who have no power in themselves to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced that as you are in a most miserable state by nature, so you are utterly unable to recover yourself any way. You are ruined; and what way will you go to work to recover yourself? Which of the two ways will you choose? Will you try it alone, or will you make use of help? Will you fall on the way of works, or on the way of the Gospel? I know very well that you will not so much as try the way of the Gospel, till once you have found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore, we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

Sinner, I would have you believe that your working will never effect it. Work, and do your best; you will never be able to work yourself out of this state of corruption and wrath. You must have Christ, else you will perish eternally. It is only ‘Christ in you’ that can be the hope of glory. But if you will needs try it, then I must lay before you, from the unalterable Word of the living God, two things which you must do for yourself. If you can do them, it must be yielded that you are able to recover yourself; but if not, then you can do nothing this way for your recovery.

1. ‘If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments’ (Matthew 19:17). That is, if you will by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commandments; for the object of these words is to beat down the pride of the man’s heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Saviour, from the impossibility of keeping the law. The answer is given suitably to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, ‘Good Master’ (Matthew 19:16), telling him, ‘There is none good but one, that is God’ (Matthew 19:17). As if he had said, You think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. As to his question, wherein he revealed his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, ‘Believe and thou shalt be saved;’ that would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew ‘what good he should do;’ but, suitable to the humor the man was in, He bids him ‘keep the commandments;’ keep them nicely and accurately, as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape, and their life be taken for those which escape. See then, O unregenerate man, what you can do in this matter; for if you will recover yourself in this way, you must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

(1) Your obedience must be perfect, in respect of the principle of it; that is, your soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin. For the law requires all moral perfection; not only actual, but habitual: and so condemns original sin; impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if you can bring this to pass you will be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam’s posterity could yet answer it, ‘Who can say, I have made my heart clean?’ (Proverbs 20:9). But if you cannot, the very want of this perfection is sin, and so lays you open to the curse and cuts you off from life. Yea, it makes all your actions, even your best actions, sinful: ‘For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?’ (Job 14:4). And do you think by sin to help yourself out of sin and misery?

(2) Your obedience must also be perfect in parts. It must be as broad as the whole law of God: if you lack one thing, you are undone; for the law denounces the curse on him that continues not in every thing written therein (Galatians 3:10). You must give Internal and external obedience to the whole law, keep all the commands in heart and life. If you break any one of them, that will ensure your ruin. A vain thought, or idle word, will still shut you up under the curse.

(3) It must be perfect in respect of degrees, as was the obedience of Adam, while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less (Matthew 22:37), ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’ If one degree of that love, required by the law, be wanting, if each part of your obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded, that want is a breach of the law, and so leaves you still under the curse. A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire, as he is able to carry, and yet it may be consumed, and will be so, if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even so, although you should do what you are able, in keeping the commandments, if you fail in the

least degree of obedience which the law enjoins, you are certainly ruined for ever, unless you take hold of Christ, renouncing all your righteousness as filthy rags. (See Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10).

(4) It must be perpetual, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things which pleased the Father, for the tenor of the law is, 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them! Hence, though Adam's obedience was, for a while, absolutely perfect; yet because at length he failed in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law. If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his prince till the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though you should, all the time of your life, live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought, or pronounce an idle word, that idle word, or vain thought, would blot out all your former righteousness, and ruin you; namely, in this way in which you are seeking to recover yourself.

Now, such is the obedience which you must perform, if you would recover yourself in the way of the law. But though you would thus obey, the law stakes you down in the state of wrath, till another demand of it be satisfied.

2. You must pay what you owe. It is undeniable that you are a sinner; and whatever you may be in time to come, justice must be satisfied for your sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained, by your suffering the denounced wrath. It may be you have changed your course of life, or are now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping the commands of God: but what have you done, or what will you do, with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him for the time wherein it is performed, and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay, deceive not yourselves; you will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures (Deuteronomy 32:34). It remains then, that either you must bear that wrath, to which for your sin you are liable, according to the law; or else you must acknowledge that you cannot bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me now ask you, Are you able to satisfy the justice of God? Can you pay your own debt? Surely not: for, as He is the infinite God, whom you have offended, the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But your punishment, or sufferings for sin, cannot be infinite in value, for you are a finite creature: therefore, they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all your sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what you must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if you can answer these demands, you may recover yourself in the way of the law. But are you not conscious of your inability to do any of these things, much more to do them all? yet if you do not all, you do nothing. Turn then to what course of life you will, you are still in a state of wrath. Screw up your obedience to the greatest height you can; suffer what God lays upon you; yea, add, if you will, to the burden, and walk under all without the least impatience: yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law; therefore you are still a ruined creature. Alas, sinner I what are you doing, while you strive to help yourself, but do not receive, and unite with, Jesus Christ? You are laboring in the fire, wearying yourself for very vanity; laboring to enter into heaven by the door which Adam's sin so bolted, that neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Do

you not see the flaming sword of justice, keeping you off from the tree of life? Do you not hear the law denouncing a curse on you for all you are doing, even for your obedience, your prayers, your tears, your reformation of life, and so on; because, being under the law's dominion, your best works are not so good as—it requires them to be under the pain of the curse? Believe it, sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to Him as the second Adam, the life—giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of His atoning blood, though you should do the utmost that any man can do, in keeping the commands of God, you will never see the face of God in peace. If you should, from this moment, bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls; if you should go into some 'wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to dragons and owls; if you should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until you had wept yourselves blind; if you should confess with your tongue, until it cleave to the roof of your mouth; pray, till your knees grow hard as horns; fast, till your body become like a skeleton, and, after all this, give it to be burnt; the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness and cannot return, that you shall perish for ever, notwithstanding all this, as not being in Christ (John 14:6), 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Acts 4:12), 'Neither is there salvation in any other.' (Mark 16:16), 'He that believeth not shall be damned!

Objection: But God is a merciful God, and He knows that we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able.

Answer 1: Though you are able to do many things, you are not able to do one thing right: you can do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ (John 1:5), 'Without me ye can do nothing.' An unrenewed man, as you are, can do nothing but sin, as we have already proved. Your best actions are sin, and so they increase your debt to justice: how then can it be expected they should lessen it?

Answer 2: Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to His commands, yet we have reason to think that those who should attempt it would never be saved: for where is the man that does as well as he can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell, that we surely must fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But,

Answer 3: Though you should do all you are able to do, in vain do you hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of yours founded on? It is founded on neither law nor Gospel; therefore it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the Gospel; for the Gospel leads the soul out of itself to Jesus Christ for all; and it establishes the law (Romans 3:31). Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears, that it is not founded on the law neither. When God set Adam working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the 'condition required of him; and the curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed; and withal were still bound to perfect obedience. For it is absurd to think, that man's sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When Christ came in the room of the elect, to purchase

their salvation, the terms were the same. justice had the elect under arrest: if He is desirous to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; He must do what they cannot do, namely, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness. Accordingly, all this He did, and so became 'the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth' (Romans 10:4). And do you think that God will abate these terms as to you, when His own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though you should beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God (Galatians 3:10). 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (Galatians 3:12), 'And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.' It is true, that God is merciful: but cannot He be merciful unless He save you in a way that is neither consistent with His law nor His Gospel? Have not His goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared, in sending the Son of His love, to do 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh?' He has provided help for those who cannot help themselves: but you, insensible of your own weakness, must needs think to recover yourself by your own works, while you are no more able to do it than to remove mountains of brass out of their place.

Wherefore I conclude, that you are utterly unable to recover yourself, in the way of works, or by the law. O that you would conclude the same concerning yourself!

Let us try next what the sinner can do to recover himself, In the way of the Gospel. It may be you think that you cannot do all by yourself alone, yet Jesus Christ offering you help, you can of yourself embrace it, and use it for your recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of your absolute need of the grace of Christ: for truly, there is help offered, but you cannot accept it: there is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land, but, alas they have no hands to lay hold of it. They are like infants exposed in the open field, who must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless some one put it in their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the Gospel, yet they cannot believe in Him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect, the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by His Spirit. Salvation is offered to them that will believe in Christ, but how can you believe? (John 5:44). It is offered to those that will come to Christ; but 'no man can come unto Him, except the Father draw him.' It is offered to those that win look to Him, as lifted on the pole of the Gospel (Isaiah 45:22); but the natural man is spiritually blind (Revelation 3:17); and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). Nay, whosoever will, he is welcome; let him come (Revelation 22:17); but there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he can be willing (Psalms 110:3).

2. Man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the Gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath, and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of the cords of love thrown out to him in the Gospel. The most cunning artificer cannot work without tools; neither can the most skilful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune. How can anyone believe, or repent, whose understanding is darkness (Ephesians 5:8), whose heart is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible (Ezekiel 36:26), whose affections are wholly disordered and distempered, who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help; hence those who most excel in them are often most estranged from spiritual things (Matthew 11:25), 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent!

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself; but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate, begotten again unto a lively hope; but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active but passive only, in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ: man cannot open it, only God can do it by His grace (Acts 16:14). He is dead in sin; he must be quickened, raised out of his grave; who can do this but God Himself? (Ephesians 2:1-5). Nay, he must be 'created in Christ Jesus, unto good works' (Ephesians 2:10). These are works of omnipotence, and can be done by no less a power.

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do any thing truly good, as was proved before at large: how then can he obey the Gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the Gospel: how can he, of himself, fall in with that plan of salvation, and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and whoso is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man for one good thought, he cannot command it (2 Corinthians 3:5), 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves! Were it offered on condition of a good word, yet 'how can ye, being evil, speak good things?' (Matthew 12:35). Nay, were it left to yourselves to choose what is easiest, Christ Himself tells you (John 15:5), 'Without me, ye can do nothing'!

5. The natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace. Can the stony heart choose but to resist the stroke? There is not only an inability, but an enmity and obstinacy in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether you know it or not, that 'thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass' (Isaiah 48:4), and cannot be overcome, but by Him who hath 'broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' Hence, humanly speaking, there is such hard work in converting a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the Gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him; but he struggles, tin, getting free of it, he goes away with a bleeding wound. When good hopes are conceived of him, by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him., there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many contrivances to avoid a Saviour, and cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, utterly unable to recover himself.

Objection 1: If we be under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it? Answer: God making man upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29), gave him a power to do everything that He should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever He commanded us, as being His creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant, for that purpose. Now, we having, by our own fault, disabled ourselves, shall God lose His right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength He gave us whereby to perform it? Has the creditor no right to require payment of his money because the debtor had squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath, but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do. So the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath, for

where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin there can be no wrath. As to what may be urged by the unhumbled soul, against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was explained before. But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind. Nay, further, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself; so that out of his own mouth, he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency to good a covert to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and, under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a death-bed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, He can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If He has power to exact the debt of obedience, He has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison, for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities, yet they want not natural abilities which nevertheless they will not improve. There are many things they can do, which they do not; they will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just. Nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary; they will not come to Christ (John 5:40). They will not repent, they will die (Ezekiel 18:31). So they win be justly condemned, because they will neither tam to God, nor come to Christ, but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light (John 3:19)

Objection 2: Why do you then preach Christ to us, call us to come to Him, to believe., repent, and use the means of salvation? Answer: Because it is your duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ, as He is offered in the Gospel, to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation; these things are commanded you of God; and His command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of, for converting His elect, and working grace in their hearts: to them, 'faith cometh by hearing' (Romans 10:17), while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in His name, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light' (Ephesians 5:14). And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion, as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains, so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God Himself directs as He sees fit. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them. Such persons may be convinced, though they be not converted: although they be not sanctified by these means, yet they may be restrained by them from running into that excess of wickedness, which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serve, as it were, to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them; though they do not restore them to life, yet they keep them from putrefying, as otherwise they would do. Finally, though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel, yet even by the power of nature you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. You may and can., if you please, do many things that would set you in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You

may go so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet scribe had done (Mark 12:34), though, it should seem, he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though you cannot cure yourselves, yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased persons as you are have been cured; though you have none to put you into it, yet you may lie at the side of it:

'Who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind Him?' as in the case of the impotent man (recorded in John 5:5-8). I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord's day; but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom's doors if you will. When you come thither he does not beat drums at your ears, that you cannot hear what is said; there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; you may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition.. When you go home, you are not fettered in your houses) where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard, but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate, and exercise your consciences with suitable questions upon what you have heard. You are not possessed with a dumb devil, that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. You are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and from your worldly business to your beds again, but you might, if you would,, make some prayers to God upon the case of your perishing souls. You may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; you may discern that you have no grace, and that you are lost and undone without it, and you may cry to God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. If you do not what you can, you will be condemned, not only for your want of grace, but for your despising it.

Objection 3: But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath. Answer: Give not place to that delusion, which puts asunder what God has joined, namely, the use of means and a sense of our own impotency. If ever the Spirit of God graciously influence your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability, and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves, as if you were to do all, and yet overlook all you do, as if you had done nothing. Will you do nothing for yourselves because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot. 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' said Philip to the eunuch; 'How can I,' said he, 'except some man should guide me?' (Acts 8:30-31). He could not understand the Scripture he read, yet he could read it: he did what he could, he read; and while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when on the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy in pursuit; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? 'Speak unto the children of Israel,' said the Lord to Moses, 'that they go forward' (Exodus 14:15). For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; but let them go forward, saith the Lord: though they cannot turn the sea to dry land, yet they can go forward to the shore. So they did; and when they did what they could) God did for them what they could not do.

Question 1: Has God promised to convert and save those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief? Answer: We may not speak wickedly for God; natural men, being

strangers to the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12), have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For, I. It is possible this course may succeed with them. If you do what you can, it may be, God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is (Acts 8:22), 'Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.' (Joel 2:14), 'Who knoweth if he will return?' If success may be, the trial should be. If, in a wreck at sea, all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety, and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavor to save themselves, yet the very possibility of escaping by that means would determine that one still to do his best with his board. Why then do not you reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did who sat at the gate of Samaria? (2 Kings 7:3-4). Why do you not say, 'If we sit still,' not doing what we can, 'we die;' let us put it to a trial; if we be saved, 'we shall live;' if not, 'we shall but die?'

Question 2: It is probable this course may succeed; God is good and merciful; He loves to surprise men with His grace, and is often 'found of them that sought him not' (Isaiah 65:1). If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty, and you are using the means, which the Lord is wont to bless for men's spiritual recovery: you lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician, and so it is probable you may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place 'where prayer was wont to be made;' and 'the Lord opened her heart' (Acts 16:13-14). You plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you win get so much as your seed again: you use means for the recovery of your health, though you are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you; and why not in this also? Importunity, we see, does very much with men. Therefore pray, meditate, desire help of God, be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace, and do not faint. Though God regard you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul, yet He may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of His own appointment, and He may bless them to you. Wherefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead, but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life. In conclusion then, let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them, raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath., wherein they would have lain and perished, had not they been mercifully visited. Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know, that you are without strength: and cannot come to Christ, till you be drawn. You are lost, and cannot help yourself. This may shake the foundation of your hopes, if you never saw your absolute need of Christ and his grace, but think to contrive for yourself by your civility, morality, drowsy wishes, and duties, and by a faith and repentance which have sprung out of your natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O be convinced of your absolute need of Christ, and His overcoming grace, believe your utter inability to recover yourself, that so you may be humbled, shaken out of your self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out your miserable case before the Lord. A proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

Thus far of man's natural state, the state of entire depravity.

S. Of Election to Everlasting Life

OF ELECTION TO EVERLASTING LIFE by Thomas Boston Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick, Scotland excerpted from his Commentary on the Shorter Catechism

Ephesians 1:3-5.—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. THE answer to the question, 'Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?' contains two heads of doctrine of great importance in the Christian system, viz. the doctrine of election, and the covenant of grace, each of which I shall speak to distinctly. I shall discourse of the first from the text now read. In which we have,

1. A party brought out of their natural state into a state of salvation, ver. 3.—Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. For whereas by nature they were under the curse, now they are blessed, and that plentifully, with all blessings, not temporal only, but spiritual and heavenly, coming from heaven, and to be consummated there.

2. The person by whom they are brought into this state. It is by the Redeemer, as the purchaser. God the Father bestows them, as the Father of Christ, viz. for his sake. And they are blessed in Christ, upon account of his merit, and coming from him as their Head.

3. Who those are whom God brings out of their natural state into a state of grace; the elect, Ephesians 1:4-5. According as he hath chosen us in him, &c. Where consider,

(1.) Election itself, he hath chosen us, separated us from others in his purpose and decree, selected us from among the rest of mankind, whom he passed by and left to perish in their natural state.

(2.) That to which they are elected: that is, to salvation, and the means leading thereto. The means are, sanctification, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; and adoption, Ephesians 1:5. that whereas they are by nature children of the devil, they should be children of God. The end is everlasting life in heaven; for that is imported in adoption, Romans 8:23. as the inheritance of the children of God.

(3.) Through whom this decree is to be executed, in him; that is, Christ, whom the Father chose to be the head of the elect, through whom he would save them.

(4.) When God elected them, before the foundation of the world, ere they were created; that is, from eternity; as appears from what our Lord says to his Father, John 17:24. 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' which can denote nothing else than from eternity.

(5.) That which moved him to elect them, according to the good pleasure of his will; that is, his mere good pleasure, so he would do it; and there was nothing without himself to move him thereto.

The words afford a foundation for the following doctrine.

Doctrine. 'God left not all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, but having from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, brings them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.' In illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew, 1. What election is.

2. Who are elected.

3. What they are chosen to.

4. The properties of this election.

5. That all the elect, and only they, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

6. By whom they are saved.

7. Lastly, Conclude with some improvement.

I. What Election Is.

I. Our first business is, to shew what election is. It is that decree of God whereby some men are chosen out from among the rest of mankind, and appointed to obtain eternal life by Jesus Christ, flowing from the mere good pleasure of God; as appears from the text. So the elect are they whom God has chosen to everlasting life, Acts 13:48. God seeing all mankind lost in Adam from all eternity, in his decree separated some from among them, to be redeemed by his Son, sanctified by his Spirit, and brought to glory.

II. Who Are Elected.

II. I proceed to shew who are elected. Who they are in particular, God only knows; but in general we say, That it is not all men, but some only. For where all are taken, there is no choice made. To say that God has made choice, plainly imports that others are not chosen, but passed by. And so there is another party of men who are reprobated; that is, whom God has not chosen to life, but has decreed to let them lie in their natural state, and to damn them for their sins, Jude 1:4; whom he shews not saving mercy unto, but hardens, they first hardening themselves, Romans 9:18. Here is no injustice in God, seeing he might have left all to perish as well as some. This is also clear from plain scripture, Matthew 20:16. 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Whence also it is plain, that the elect are the lesser number of the world, Matthew 7:13-14. 'Enter ye in at the strait gate (says Christ); for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' They are a little flock, Luke 12:32. Yet the efficacy of the Lord's love and Christ's death is more and greater than that of Adam's sin, seeing it is greater to save one soul than to ruin all. And further, the scripture teaches, that though God has his own of all sorts, yet this blessed company, God does not make up, chiefly of the highest and most honourable among men. 1 Corinthians 1:26-28. 'Ye see your calling; 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; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.'

III. What The Elect Are Chosen To.

III. The next head is, to shew what they are chosen to.

1. They are chosen to be partakers of everlasting life. Hence the scripture speaks of some being 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts 13:48. and of 'appointing them to obtain salvation,' 1 Thessalonians 5:9. God appoints some to be rich, great, and honourable, some to be low and mean in the world; and others to be in a middle station, objects neither of envy nor contempt; but electing love appoints those on whom it fails to be saved from sin, and all the ruins of the fall; its great view is to eternal glory in heaven. To this they were appointed before they had a being.

2. They are chosen also to grace as the mean, as well as to glory as the end. God's predestinating them to eternal blessedness includes both, as in the text; and it further appears from 2 Thessalonians 2:13. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Hence faith is held out as a certain consequent of election, Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.' The man who intends to dwell in a house yet unbuilt, intends also the means by which it may be made a fit habitation. So God having from eternity pitched on a select number of the ruined race of mankind as objects of his love, and having predestinated them to everlasting life, intended also the means necessary and proper for obtaining that glorious end. And therefore there is no ground from the decree of election to slight the means of salvation. God has so joined the end and the means, that none can put them asunder.

IV. The Properties of Election.

IV. Let us consider the properties of election.

1. It is altogether free, without any moving cause, but God's mere good pleasure. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God. There is nothing before, or above, or without his purpose, that can be pitched upon as the cause of all that grace and goodness that he bestows upon his chosen ones. There was no merit or motive in them, as Christ told his disciples, John 15:16. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' His choice is antecedent to ours. The persons who are singled out to be the objects of his special grace, were a part of lost mankind, the same by nature with others who were passed by, and left to perish in their sin. When God had all Adam's numerous progeny under the view of his all-seeing eye, he chose some, and passed by others. He found nothing in the creature to cast the balance of his choice, or to determine it to one more than another. Those that were rejected were as eligible as those that were chosen. They were all his creatures, and all alike obnoxious to his wrath by sin. It was grace alone that made the difference. So the prophet argues, Malachi 1:2-3. 'I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.' And this is abundantly clear in the text. Why doth God write some men's names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol some whom he intends to make citizens of Zion, and heirs of immortal glory, and refuse to put others in his register? The text tells us, it is the good pleasure of his will.

You may, says an eminent divine, render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, which is the top and foundation of all; and this act can be reduced to no other head of reason, but to that of his royal prerogative. If you inquire, why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? the reason is, because of the faith of the one, and the unbelief of the other. But why do some men believe? It is because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied these means with the power and efficacy of the Spirit. But why did God accompany these means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? It is because he decreed by his grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree and chuse some to glory, and not others? Into what can you resolve this, but only into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and damnation at the last upshot are acts of God as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, giving life and eternal happiness to believers, and inflicting death and eternal misery upon unbelievers, conformable to his own law. Men may render a reason for these proceedings. But the choice of some and the preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. What reason can be given for his advancing one part of matter to the noble dignity of a star, and leaving another part to make up the dark body of the earth? to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason that a prince subjects one malefactor to condign punishment, and lifts up another to a place of profit and trust? it is merely because he will, Romans 9:18. Hence we may infer,

(1.) That God did not chuse men to everlasting life and happiness for any moral perfection that he saw in them; because he converts those, and changes them by his grace, who are most sinful and profligate, as the Gentiles, who were soaked in idolatry and superstition. He found more faith among the Romans, who were Pagan idolaters, than among the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and to whom his heavenly oracles were committed. He planted a saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; and at Ephesus, that presented the world with a cup of fornication in the temple of Diana. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle in his epistle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable liars, and not to be credited; evil beasts, not to be associated with; slow bellies, fit for no service. Now what merit and attractive was here? What invitements could he have from lying, beastliness, and gluttony, but only from his own sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the burning, while he left straiter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

(2.) God doth not chuse men to grace and glory for any civil perfection that is in them; because he calls and renews the most despicable. He doth not elevate nature to grace on account of wealth or honour, or any civil station or dignities in the world, 1 Corinthians 1:26. forecited. A purple robe is very seldom decked and adorned with the jewel of grace. He takes more of the mouldy clay, than of refined dust, to cast into his image, and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels, than in the world's golden ones. Should God impart his grace most to those who abound in wealth and honour, it had laid a foundation for men to think, that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies, and to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth, and falls to the ground, when we behold the subjects of divine grace as void originally of any allurements as they are full of provocations.

(3.) Their foreseen faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, are not the cause of election; because these are the fruits and effects, and therefore cannot be the causes of election, Romans 8:29. Acts 13:48. It is clear also from this text, where it is said, they are chosen to be holy, and to adoption, and therefore to faith, by which we obtain it, John 1:12. God did not chuse and elect men to grace and glory because they were holy, or because he did foresee that they would be so, but that he might purify and make them holy. And let it be observed, that the scripture attributes election only to God's good pleasure, Romans 9:11,Romans 9:13,Romans 9:16. Matthew 11:25. And indeed, if it depended on foreseen faith or good works, we should rather be said to chuse God than he to chuse us.

(4.) God did not chuse some to life and happiness, because he was under any obligation to do so. He is indebted to none, and he is disobliged by all. He was under no tie to pity man's misery, and repair the ruins of the fall. He owes no more debt to fallen man than to fallen angels, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. God as a Sovereign gave laws to man, and strength sufficient to observe them. Now, what obligation is upon God to repair that strength which man hath wilfully lost, and to pull him out of that miserable pit into which he had voluntarily plunged himself? None at all. So then there was nothing in the elect more than others to move God to chuse them either to grace or glory. It was, and must be, the gracious issue and result of his sovereign will and mere good pleasure.

2. Election is eternal. They are elected from all eternity, Ephesians 1:4. chosen before the foundation of the world, 2 Timothy 1:9. 'He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' All God's decrees are eternal, Ephesians 1:11. 'We are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' God takes no new counsels, to do which would be inconsistent with his infinite perfection. Because God is eternal, his purposes must be of equal duration with his existence. And to imagine that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from eternity, without any forethought, or resolution what to do, would be to suppose him to be undetermined or unresolved, at the time of his giving being to all things. And to suppose that the divine will is capable of new determinations, is to argue him to be imperfect; which would be as much an instance of mutability in him, as for him to alter his purpose. Election to everlasting life, must therefore be eternal.

3. It is particular and definite. God has chosen a certain number of the children of men to life, whom he knows by name, so as they can neither be more nor fewer. Hence their names are said to be written in the book of life, Luke 10:20. Php 4:3. and others are said not to be written there, Revelation 17:8. Though they are known to none, yet God knows them all, 2 Timothy 2:19. And they are given to Christ, John 17:9. Therefore God's decree of election is not a general decree only to save all that shall believe and persevere in the faith; for that way it might happen that none at all might be saved.

4. It is secret, or cannot be known, till God be pleased to discover it. Hence it is called 'the mystery of his will,' Ephesians 1:9. as being hid in God from before the foundation of the world, and would for ever have been so, had he not discovered it in his word.

It is unchangeable. Mutability is an imperfection peculiar to creatures. As the least change in God's understanding, so as to know more or less than that hid from eternity, would be an instance of

imperfection; the same must be said with respect to his holy will, which cannot be susceptible of new determinations. Though there are many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his will, as well as the effects of his power; yet there is no shadow of change in his purpose. No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for God to change his mind, nor can any higher power oblige him to do it; nor can any defect of power to accomplish his design, induce him to alter his purpose. Those who are once elected can never be reprobated. All that are elected shall most certainly be saved. None of them can be left to perish. For all the divine purposes are unchangeable, and must be fulfilled, Isaiah 46:10.; and this in particular, 2 Timothy 2:19. Election is the foundation of God's house, laid by his own hand, which cannot be shaken, but stands sure; and a sealed foundation, as men seal what they will have; a seal of two parts securing it; on God's part, God loves and keeps them that are his, that they fall not away; on our part, the same God takes care that his elect depart from iniquity. It is not possible they can be totally and finally deceived, Matthew 24:24, and whom God has chosen he glorifies, Romans 8:29-30. When we are bid make our election sure, it is meant of certainty and assurance as to our knowledge of it, and by no means of God's purpose.

V. All of The Elect, & They Alone, Saved In Time.

V. The next thing is to shew, that all the elect, and they only, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

1. All the elect are redeemed by Christ, John 10:15. 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' says he. They are all in due time, by the power of the Spirit, regenerated, converted, and brought to Christ, and get faith to lay hold on him, John 6:37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Everlasting love at length breaks forth in bringing them to grace, Jeremiah 31:3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' They are all justified, adopted and sanctified, Romans 8:30.; and all of them persevere in grace, John 17:12. 1 Peter 1:5. And all this by virtue of their election, Titus 2:14.

2. None other but the elect are brought into a state of salvation; none but they are redeemed, sanctified, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, John 17:9. Christ prays not for them. Those that perish were never redeemed, nor experienced a saving change passing upon them, as appears from Romans 8:29-30. and 1 John 2:19. God has passed them by, and suffers them to perish in their sin and guilt.

VI. By Whom The Elect Are Saved.

VI. I come to shew by whom the elect are saved. It is by Christ the Redeemer. Hence the apostle says, Titus 3:4-6. 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' There is no other way of salvation but by him, Acts 4:12. By him is all grace and glory purchased, and by his satisfaction there is a way opened for the venting of mercy with the good leave of justice. More particularly,

1. Before the elect could be delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves, a valuable satisfaction behoved to be given to the justice of God for the injury done by

sin. It is evident from scripture, that God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it. Several things plead strongly for this:

As, (1.) The infinite purity and holiness of God. There is a contrariety in sin to the holiness of his nature, which is his peculiar glory; and from thence his hatred of it doth arise, which is as essential to him as his love to himself. The infinite purity and rectitude of his nature infers the most perfect abhorrence of whatever is opposite to it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalms 5:4-5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' God cannot but hate all the workers of iniquity, and he cannot but punish them. His holiness is not only voluntary, but by necessity of nature. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

(2.) The justice of God pleads for a valuable satisfaction for sin. And here we are not to consider God as a private person wronged, but as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, and the sovereign Protector of those sacred laws by which the reasonable creature is to be directed. Now, as it was most reasonable and convenient, that at the first giving of the law he should lay the strongest restraint upon man for preventing sin by the threatening of death; so it was most just and congruous, when the law was broken by man's rebellion, that the penalty should be inflicted either upon the person of the offender, according to the immediate intent of the law, or that satisfaction equivalent to the offence should be made, that the majesty and purity of God might appear in his justice. He is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right.

(3.) The wisdom of God, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatening without a valuable satisfaction. For it is as good to have no king as no laws for government, and as good to have no law as no penalty, and as good that no penalty be annexed to the law as no execution of it. Hence, says a learned divine, It is altogether indecent, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which provoketh the execution of the law, should procure the abrogation of it, as that should supplant and undermine the law, for the alone prevention of which the law was made. How could it be expected, that men should fear and tremble before God, when they should find themselves more scared and hurt by his threatenings against sin?

(4.) The truth and veracity of God required a satisfaction for sin. The word had gone out of God's mouth, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and again it is said, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, this sentence was immutable, and the word that had gone out of his mouth must stand. Had God violated his truth by dispensing with the punishment threatened, he had rendered himself an unfit object of trust; he had exposed all the promises or threatenings which he should have made after man's impunity, to the mockery and contempt of the offender, and excluded his word from any credit with man for the future. And therefore God's word could not fall to the ground without an accomplishment. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall stand firm. He will be true to his threatenings, though thousands and millions should perish.

2. As satisfaction to justice was necessary, and that which God insisted upon, so the elect could not give it themselves, neither was there any creature in heaven and earth that could do it for them. Heaven and earth were at an infinite loss to find out a ransom for their souls. We may apply to this purpose what we have, Isaiah 63:5. 'I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered

that there was none to uphold.' This is the desperate and forlorn condition of the elect by nature as well as others.

3. God pitched upon Christ in his infinite grace and wisdom as the fittest person for managing this grand design. Hence it is said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' And the apostle saith, he 'hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin.' On this account he is called 'his servant whom he hath chosen, and his elect in whom his soul delighteth.' God speaks to them, as Job 33:24. 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.'

4. Christ accepted the office of a Redeemer, and engaged to make his soul an offering for sin. He cheerfully undertook this work in that eternal transaction that was between the Father and him. He was content to stand in the elect's room, and to submit himself to the terrible strokes of vindictive justice. He is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as a Surety in their stead, Psalms 40:6-7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, &c. Then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. He willingly yielded to all the conditions requisite for the accomplishment of our redemption. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Hebrews 10:5. 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me.' It behoved him to have a body to suffer that which was represented by these legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. He condescended to lay aside the robes of his glory, to make himself of no reputation, to take upon him the form of a servant, and be found in the likeness of men.

5. Christ satisfied offended justice in the room of the elect, and purchased eternal redemption for them. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' Php 2:8. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, Isaiah 53:10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others in the first treaty. 'Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldst not; in them thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. These sacrifices were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that redemption was purchased for men, Romans 5:10. Ephesians 2:13.Colossians 1:21. And when he was upon the cross, he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished; I have done all that was appointed for me to do; the articles on my part are now fulfilled; there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

Thus the elect are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

VII. Inferences.

I shall conclude all with a few inferences.

1. Behold here the freedom and glory of sovereign grace, which is the sole cause why God did not leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, as he did the fallen angels. He was no more obliged to the one than the other. Why did he chuse any of the fallen race of men to grace and glory? It was his mere good pleasure to pitch on some, and pass by others. He could have been without them all, without any spot either on his happiness or justice; but out of his mere good pleasure he pitched his love on a select number, in whom he will display the invincible efficacy of

his sovereign grace, and thereby bring them to the fruition of glory. This proceeds from his absolute sovereignty. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration here. If he had pleased, he might have made all the objects of his love; and if he had pleased he might have chosen none, but have suffered Adam and all his numerous offspring to sink eternally into the pit of perdition. It was in his supreme power to have left all mankind under the rack of his justice; and, by the same right of dominion, he may pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. There is no cause in the creature but all in God. It must be resolved into his sovereign will. So it is said, Romans 9:15-16. He saith to Moses, 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' And yet God did not will without wisdom. He did not chuse hand over head, and act by mere will without reason and understanding. An infinite wisdom is far from such a kind of procedure. But the reason of God's proceedings is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself. The rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weak and shallow capacities. The apostle acknowledges not only a wisdom in his proceeding, but riches and a treasure of wisdom; and not only that, but a depth and vastness of these riches of wisdom; but was wholly incapable to give a scheme and inventory of it. Hence he cries out, Romans 11:33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Let us humbly adore the divine sovereignty. We should cast ourselves down at God's feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure. This is a more becoming carriage in a Christian, than contentious endeavours to measure God by our line.

2. This doctrine should stop men's murmurings and silence all their pleadings with or against God. O what strivings are there sometimes in the hearts of men about God's absolute sovereignty in electing some and rejecting others? The apostle insists much upon this in Romans 9:1-33. where, having represented the Lord speaking thus by Moses, Romans 9:15. 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' he presently prevents an objection, or the strife of man with God about that saying, Romans 9:19. 'Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?' This is man's plea against the sovereign will of God. But what saith the Lord by the apostle to such a pleader? We have his reproof of him for an answer, in Romans 9:20. 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' The apostle brings in this argument as to man's eternal state, He must not strive with God about that. He must not say, Why doth God find fault with man? His absolute power is his reason why he disposeth thus or thus of thee, or any other man. He will give thee no account why it is so; but his own will to have it so. He may chuse some for the glory of his rich, free, and sovereign grace, and leave others to perish in their sins for the glory of his power and justice. This should stop men's mouths, and make them sit down quietly under all God's dealings.

3. This is ground of humility and admiration to the elect of God, and shows them to what they owe the difference that is between them and others, even to free grace. Those who are passed by were as eligible as those that were chosen. Though God hath dignified them, and raised them to be heirs of glory, yet they were heirs of wrath, and no better than others by nature, Ephesians 2:3. Well may they say with David in another case, 'Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that

thou hast brought me hitherto?' All were in the same corrupt mass, and nothing but free grace made the difference between the elected and the non-elected.

4. Then the elect shall not persist in their infidelity and natural state, but shall all be effectually called and brought in to Christ. Whatever good things God hath purposed for them shall surely be conferred upon and wrought in them by the irresistible efficacy of his powerful grace. God's counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure.

5. Then people may know that they are elected. Hence is that exhortation, 2 Peter 1:10. 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Though we cannot break in at the first hand upon the secrets of God, yet if we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him as our only Saviour, and submit to him as our Lord and Sovereign, we may know that we are elected, seeing the elect and they only are brought to believe. Others may be elected, but they cannot know it till they actually believe.

6. The Lord will never cast off his elect people. He that chose them from eternity, while he saw no good in them, will not afterwards cast them off. God's decree of election is the best security they can have for life and salvation, and a foundation that standeth absolutely sure. Whatever faults and follies they may be guilty of, yet the Lord will never cast them off. They shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

7. Lastly, This doctrine may teach us to form our judgment aright concerning the success of the gospel. The gospel and the ministrations thereof are designed for the bringing in of God's chosen ones. Revelation 1:1-20 never did nor ever will believe: but one thing is sure, that all who are ordained to eternal life shall believe and obey the gospel, Romans 11:7.

S. Of Justification

OF JUSTIFICATION by

Thomas Boston Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick, Scotland excerpted from his Commentary on the Shorter Catechism Romans 3:24.—Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. THE first of those benefits which the called do partake of is justification, which is the great relative change made upon them, bringing them out of the state of condemnation, wherein they are born, and live till they come to Christ. In the text we have, 1. The persons justified, sinners, viz. believing in Christ. It is the justification of a sinner that the apostle speaks of, as is implied in the connection, Romans 3:23-24. 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace; but believing, Romans 3:26.—'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' 2. The party justifying, God the judge of all, his grace. It is God's act to justify a sinner. 3. The manner and moving cause, freely by his grace. It is done freely, without any thing of ours done by us to procure or merit it; and it flows from God's grace or free favour to undeserving and ill deserving creatures. 4. The material and meritorious cause, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He has paid the price and ransom whereby the sinner is set free. The text affords this great and important doctrinal note, viz. Doctrine. 'The justification of a sinner before God is of free grace, through the satisfaction of Christ.' In discoursing from this subject I shall shew, 1. What it is to justify a sinner, in general, in the scriptural sense. 2. What are the parts of justification. 3. The cause of our justification. 4. Apply the subject. I. What it is to Justify a Sinner I. I shall shew what it is to justify a sinner, in general, in the scripture-sense. Justification and sanctification are indeed inseparable. In vain do they pretend to be justified who are not sanctified; and in vain do they fear they are not justified, who are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, 1 Corinthians 6:11. But yet they are distinct benefits, not to be confounded, nor taken for one and the same. Justification is not the making of a person just and righteous, by infusing grace or holiness into him. But it is a discharging him from guilt, and declaring or pronouncing him righteous. So it is a law-term taken from courts of judicature, wherein a person is accused, tried, and after trial absolved. Thus the scripture opposeth it to accusation and condemnation,Romans 8:33-34. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of 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 also maketh intercession for us,' Deuteronomy 25:1. 'They shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.' And so it is declared to be a sin to justify the wicked, Proverbs 17:15. not to make them righteous, but to pronounce them righteous. Hence it follows, that, 1. Justification is not a real change of the sinner's nature, but a relative change of his state. The change of the sinner's nature, from sin to holiness, is inseparably annexed to it: but it is only the bringing him out of the state of condemnation, and setting him beyond the reach of the law, as a righteous person, which is an unspeakable benefit. 2. Justification is an act done and passed in an instant in the court of heaven, as soon as the sinner believes in Christ; and not a work carried on by degrees. For if a sinner be not perfectly justified, he is not justified at all. If a man were accused of ten capital crimes, if one of them be fixed upon him, he is condemned, and must die. And hence also, though one may be

more sanctified than another, yet no believer is in the sight of God more justified than another, since the state of justification is not capable of degrees. II. The Parts of Justification II. I proceed to shew what are the parts of justification. These are two, the pardoning of sin, and the accepting of the sinner's person as righteous. This double benefit is conferred on the sinner in justification. That we may the more clearly take up this matter, we must view the process of a sinner's justification. And here, First, God himself sits Judge in this process, Psalms 9:4. 'Thou sattest in the throne judging right.' He gave the law; and as he is the Lawgiver, so he is the Judge of all the earth. Men may justify themselves, Luke 10:29. and others may justify them: but what does it avail, if God do not justify them? for only he has the authority and power to do it, Romans 8:33. 'It is God that justifieth.' Many a man looking overly into his own state and case, passes a very favourable sentence on himself, and his way may be so blameless before the world, that others must judge him a righteous man too; but the judgment of God comes after, and reverses all. And he only can justify authoritatively and irreversibly. For, 1. He only is the Lawgiver, and he only has power to save or to destroy, and therefore the judgment must be left to him, James 4:12. The case concerns his honour and law, and must be tried at his tribunal; and whoever takes it in hand, he will call it to his own bar. 2. To him the debt is owing, and therefore he only can give the discharge. Against him the crime is committed, and he only can pardon it. Accept us as righteous who will, if he do it not, who gave the law of righteousness, it is nothing, Mark 2:7. Secondly, The sinner is cited to answer before God's judgment-seat, by the messengers of God, the ministers of the gospel, Malachi 3:1. Every sermon an unconverted sinner hears, is a summons put into his hand to answer for his living in a state and course of sin. He is told he has broken God's law, and he must go to God and see what he will answer, and what course he will take with his debt. But, alas! for the most part sinners are so secure, that they sit the summons, slight it, and will not appear. But that is not all. Some keep themselves out of the messenger's way; either they will not come at all, or very seldom to the public assemblies where the summons is given, Hebrews 10:25. But the leaving of the summons there will hold in law before him that sends them, and the dust of the messenger's feet will be sufficient witness to the execution, Matthew 10:14. Some never read the summons, they never once seriously consider or apply to themselves the word preached. They hear it as if they heard it not, it never sinks into their hearts. Others tear the summons in pieces; their hearts, like Ahab in the case of Micaiah, rise against the word and the bearer of it, and they hate both, as speaking no good of them. Some affront the messengers, and sometimes lay violent hands on them, Matthew 22:6. And thus some sit the summons all their days, and never appear till death bring them under his black rod, before the tribunal in another world, where there is no access to justification or pardon. But God suffers none of his elect to do so always. Thirdly, The Lord the Judge sends out other messengers, and they apprehend the sinner, lay hands on him to carry him, whether he will or not, before the judgment-seat, and oblige him to abide his trial. And these are two, the Spirit of bondage, and an awakened conscience, John 16:8-9. Proverbs 20:27. These will catch the man, and hunt him till they find him out, when they have got their order, Jeremiah 2:27. They apprehended Paul when going to Damascus, and left him not till he appeared, and submitted himself. But it is not always so. Some that are apprehended get out of the messenger's hands, and make their escape unhappily. When they are catched, they are unruly prisoners, they struggle and wrestle, and strive against the Spirit, and their own consciences, Acts 7:51. they go no farther with them than they are dragged. They get the mastery at length over their conscience, break its bonds, and stifle its convictions, and so grieve and quench the Spirit, that

they get away to their own ruin; like Cain, Saul, Felix, &c. But none of God's elect ever get away altogether. Fourthly, Then the elect soul is infallibly sisted at length before the judgment-seat. The Spirit of bondage and the awakened conscience apprehend him afresh, and bring their prisoner in chains of guilt unto the bar trembling, and he can escape the trial no longer, before a holy God, Acts 16:29-30. Then what fear, sorrow and anxiety, seize the prisoner's soul, while he sees a just Judge on the throne, a strict and severe law laid before him, and he has a guilty conscience within! And he must undergo a trial for his life, not the life of the body only, but of soul and body for evermore. These things may seem idle tales to some; but if ye have not experienced the reality of them, ye shall do it, or dreadful shall the judgment after death be to you. Fifthly, Then the indictment, or criminal libel, is read in the ears of the trembling sinner before the Judge, and that by the law, which manages the accusation so as the pannel shall stand speechless, Romans 3:10-19. Every one of the ten commands accuse him of innumerable evils and transgressions. His omissions and commissions are laid in broadband before him; his sins of heart, lip and life, and the sin of his nature, are all charged upon him, and that with their several aggravations. And sentence is demanded against the pannel, according to justice, and agreeable to the law, Galatians 3:10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Sixthly, Then the sinner must plead guilty or not, to the indictment. Indeed, if he were innocent, he might plead not guilty, deny the libel, and thereupon he would be justified. But, alas! this plea is not for us poor sinners. For, (1.) It is utterly false, Romans 3:10. Ecclesiastes 7:20. James 3:2. And, (2.) Falsehood can never bear out before God's judgment-seat. There is no want of evidence to prove all. Conscience within is as a thousand witnesses, and will testify against the sinner. The Judge is omniscient, and there is no concealing of our crimes from him. Therefore this plea will not do, Romans 3:20. The sinner then must needs plead guilty, confess the libel, and every article of it, acknowledge the debt, and every article of it, though he is utterly unable to pay, Romans 3:19. Seventhly, The sinner being convicted by his own confession as guilty, is put to it to plead, What he has to say why the sentence of death eternal should not pass against him, according to law and justice, and why he should not be hauled from the judgment-seat to execution. Here, what shall he plead at this awful period of time, where his state for eternity is just upon the turning point? Shall he plead mercy for mere mercy's sake, casting himself down at the Judge's feet? Justice interposes betwixt mercy and the sinner, and pleads that the Judge of all the earth must do right, that he cannot prostitute his honour for the safety of rebels, but must magnify the law, and make it honourable. The truth of God interposes, and says, the word is already gone out of the Judge's mouth, and must be accomplished, That without shedding of blood there is no remission. Whither shall the sinner turn now? Can the saints help? No; they cannot spare any of their oil. Can angels do nothing? No; their united stock would not be sufficient to clear the debt. The sinner then must die the death, and sink under his own burden, if help come not from another quarter. So, Eighthly, The formerly despised Mediator, the great Advocate at this court, who takes the desperate causes of sinners in hand, and expedites them, offers himself now, in this extremity, to the sinner, with his perfect righteousness, and all his salvation. The sinner embraces him with heart and good-will, enters into the covenant, by faith lays hold on him, renounces all other claims, and betakes himself to his alone merits and suretyship. Now is the sinner united to Christ, and by virtue of that union has communion with him, particularly in his righteousness, and so stands before God in the white raiment of the Mediator's righteousness. Now has the sinner a plea that will infallibly bring him off. He pleads, he is guilty indeed; yet he must not die, for Christ has died

for him. The debt was a just debt; but the Cautioner has paid it, and therefore he craves up his discharge. The law's demands were just; but they are all answered already, both as to doing and suffering. The soul is now married to Christ; and therefore, if the law or justice want any thing, they must seek it of the Husband, and not of her, seeing the soul is thereby put under covert. Therefore the convicted believing sinner gets in under the covert of the Mediator's blood, which stands open in that court; and there stands and pleads against all that law or justice can demand, that he must not die, but be graciously acquitted. Lastly, Hereupon God the great Judge sustaining the plea passes the sentence of justification on the sinner, according to the everlasting agreement that passed betwixt the Father and the Son, Isaiah 53:11. The pannel gets the white stone and new name, and so is for ever set beyond the reach of condemnation,Romans 8:1. This is excellently described by Elihu, Job 33:22-24. 'Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' This great benefit consists of two parts, as I observed before. FIRST, The pardon of sin, Acts 13:38-39. 'Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' The sinner having this act of grace passed in his favour, is fully indemnified as to all crimes committed by him against the honour and law of the King of heaven, so as they shall never be charged upon him any more. Here I shall shew, 1. What pardon is. 2. The properties of it. 3. Its many sweet names, that discover the nature of it. First, I shall shew what pardon is. It is not the taking away the nature of sin, pardoned sin is still sin; God justifies the sinner, but will never justify his sin. Nor is it the removing of the intrinsic demerit of sin; it still deserves condemnation, though it shall never actually condemn the sinner, Romans 8:1. Nor is it a simple delay of the punishment, a reprieve is no pardon. There are four things to be considered in sin. (1.) The reigning power of it, which is broken in regeneration and sanctification, Romans 6:14. (2.) The blot and stain, which is taken away in the gradual advances of sanctification, 1 Corinthians 6:11. (3.) The indwelling power, which is removed in glorification, Hebrews 12:23. (4.) The guilt, which is taken away in pardon. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. The guilt of an unjustified sinner is an obligation lying upon his head, to bear the wrath and eternal vengeance of God, to satisfy justice for the breaking of his law. It is a bond binding him to go to the prison of hell, and lie there till he hath paid the utmost farthing of his debt of sin, 2 Thessalonians 1:9. It arises from the sanction of the law, Genesis 2:17. So that the sinner, like Shimei, having broke his confinement, is a man of death. Pardon is the taking away of this guilt, this dreadful obligation. While the criminal stands bound with the cords of guilt for execution, a pardoning God says, 'Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom, Job 33:24. Pardon cuts the knot, whereby guilt ties sin and wrath together, cancels the bond obliging the sinner to pay his debt, reverses the sentence of condemnation, and puts him out of the law's reach. Secondly, I am to shew the properties of this pardon.—These are chiefly three. It is, 1. Full: Micah 7:19. 'Thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' Colossians 2:13.—'Having forgiven you all trespasses.' All the man's sins are pardoned together. God gives no half-pardons; it suits not either the riches of his grace, nor the sinner's necessity. For one leak will sink the ship, and so will one unpardoned sin damn the soul. Great and small sins, sins against the gospel and the law, the most and least heinous, in the happy hour of pardon, sink down all together into the sea of the Redeemer's blood, Jeremiah 50:20. And every sin is fully pardoned. As to the question, Whether all sins, past, present, and to

come, are pardoned together and at once in justification? As to sins past and present, there is no difficulty, they are all at once pardoned. As to sins to come, a justified person, being in Christ, can never more incur the guilt of eternal wrath, but only the guilt of fatherly chastisements, so that the pardon before described needs never be renewed. And the only pardon a justified person has to seek is that of the guilt of fatherly anger with the intimation of the other pardon. For if a justified person could ever again be liable actually to the eternal wrath of God for his sin, then either he must fall from his union with Christ, which is indissoluble, or he may be in Christ, and yet under condemnation,Romans 8:1. Besides, a person once in Christ is no more under the dominion of the law, and therefore cannot be under its curse, Romans 6:14. and Romans 7:4.1 2. Free: So says the text, Being justified freely, Colossians 2:13. It is free to us, though to Christ it was the price of blood. What have we to give for a pardon? Could we weep as many tears as the sea has drops, afflict ourselves as many years as the world has stood minutes, it would not buy a pardon, since it is not infinite, Psalms 44:8. Our best duties are but rags, and cannot cover the menstruous rags, and would but cover one unclean thing with another; the sins of our unrighteousness with the sins of our righteousness. The sinner never pays for it, nor can pay for it, Isaiah 43:24-25. 3. Unalterable and irrevocable. Temporal mercies are lent, but pardon is given; it is a grace-gift, (Romans 11:29.), that God never repents of bestowing. When God writes a sinner's pardon, whoever quarrel it, conscience, Satan, &c. God says, What I have written, I have written. Come after what will, it must stand for ever. No following misdemeanors can take it off, Jeremiah 31:34. 'I will forget their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' Isaiah 54:9.—'I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee,' &c. A child of God may lose the sense of his pardon, but the pardon itself is written in the Mediator's blood, and so is one of those same mercies mentioned, Isaiah 55:3. Thirdly, Farther to shew the nature of pardon of sin, it has many sweet names, discovering its nature. And, 1. It is a blotting out of sin: 'I, even I,' says Jehovah, 'am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,' Isaiah 43:25. This is an allusion to a creditor, who, when he discharges a debt, scores it out of his count-book. Sin is a debt, the worst of debts. We cannot pay it, we cannot escape the hands of our creditor. And, alas! we are ready to deny our debt, will not come to count and reckoning, as long as we can get it shifted. So the debt stands in God's book. But the sinner being apprehended, as said is, he is brought to count and reckoning. God produces the large account. The sinner's heart falls at the sight; he falls down, confesses his debt, and his inability to pay, flies to the great Cautioner, saying, 'Undertake for me,'—Psalms 119:122; and Christ says, All thy wants be upon me. Then God takes the pen, dips it in the Mediator's blood, and cross-scores all the sinner's account, Acts 3:19. Colossians 2:14. 2. A not imputing of sin, Psalms 32:2, 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.' This is a metaphor from merchants, who, when a rich friend undertakes for one of their poor debtors, charge their accounts no more upon him; they will seek him no more for it. God took Christ's single bond for the debt of all that would put themselves in Christ's poor roll by faith. So as soon as a sinner comes to Christ by faith, and gives in his name as a broken man unable to pay his debt, accepting of Christ as Cautioner, God imputes sin no more to that man. What accounts have been taken on by the sinner, he leaves the Son to clear with his Father. This is sustained in the court of heaven: the Creditor and the Cautioner take the matter between them, and the debt is charged no more on the sinner. 3. A taking of the burden of sin from off the sinner, Psalms 32:1.Hosea 14:2. Sin is a heavy burden, a burden increasing every day, to the unpardoned sinner. It sunk down the angels from their first habitation, and is a weight that they and the damned in hell

are wrestling under at this day, but unable to get it off. The unawakened sinner finds it not; but when the conscience is awakened, it burdens the sinner all over; it is a burden on his head, on his spirit, on his back. In the day of pardon, the sinner falls down under his burden, looks to Christ the great Burden-bearer, and God comes and takes his burden off his back, and bids him stand upright. And none else can do it, Numbers 14:17-19. 4. A washing of the sinner, 1 Corinthians 6:11. 'But ye are washed.' They that have unpardoned guilt on them, they have not only a heavy, but a foul, filthy burden on them.—And they must be washed and thoroughly washed, for it sticks closely to the soul, Psalms 51:2. 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' Hence the Lord offers, Isaiah 1:18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' In the day of pardon, the Lord sprinkles the sinner with the Mediator's blood, and he is made clean, yea dips him in that fountain, Zechariah 13:1; and he is purged and purified from all sin, 1 John 1:7. 5. A dismissing or remission of sin, Matthew 6:12.Romans 3:25. God does not only take it away, but sends it away. The sinner's guilt is laid over on Christ, as the scape-goat who bears it away never to return on the sinner. Sin is a strong tie, whereby the sinner is bound down to the pit, so as he cannot lift up his head to the Lord with true confidence. Pardon brings a relaxation to the sinner, cutting asunder these cords of death. It is a sending sin, away from the sinner, back to the devil from whence it came. 6. The dispelling of a thick cloud, Isaiah 44:22. Sin is a cloud rising from below: a watery cloud, a black cloud, a thick cloud: which once drowned the whole world, except those in the ark. It hangs night and day over the head of the unpardoned sinner, go where he will. He cannot see the face of God through it; it vails his mercy, wraps him up in blackness of darkness, that he can have no communion with heaven. But pardon, like the shining sun, breaks through the cloud, and dissolves it; and like a mighty wind, there is a breathing from the throne of grace, that rends the cloud and scatters it, be it never so thick; so that all the sinner's guilt as a cloud vanishes away, and appears no more. Thus the soul is restored to the light of God's countenance, and may look up with confidence and joy, Job 33:24,Job 33:26. 7. A casting of sin behind the Lord's back, Isaiah 38:17. David says, 'his sin was ever before him,' Psalms 51:4. before him as the accuser stood before the accused face to face. Praying for pardon, he prays God would hide his face from it, Psalms 51:9. A pardoning God will not look on the sin of the sinner that is in Christ, Numbers 23:21. 'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.' The Lord sitting on a throne of grace, to which the believer carries his process from the throne of strict justice, when Satan gives in his bill or libel against the believer, takes it and casts it away behind his back, as not to look on it, nor charge him with it. 8. A casting it into the depths of the sea, Micah 7:19.—O the fulness of that expression! He will not cast them into a brook or river, what falls in there may be got up again perhaps; but into the sea, where we reckon a thing dead that falls. But there are some shallow places in the sea; he will cast them into the depths of the sea, these devouring depths. But what if they sink not? he will cast them in with force and power, that they shall go to the ground, and sink as lead in the ocean of the blood of Christ. 9. A covering of sin, Psalms 32:1. This is an allusion to what the Lord commanded the Israelites in their camp in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 23:14. It is the same word in the Hebrew. It is a covering of it so as to hide it, that it shall not appear. Sin is the worst of pollutions, but a pardon spreads a cover over it, that it shall not appear any more. God condemned sin in the flesh of Christ, Romans 8:3. and therefore, as soon as the soul takes hold of Christ, the word of pardon goes out of the King's mouth, and sin, like the face of Haman, in such a case, is covered never to

see the light any more. 10. Lastly, Which crowns all, a not remembering of sin, Jeremiah 31:34. What can be said more to shew the fullness of pardon? Many forgive, but they will never forget the offences done them: but our God, when he pardons, not only forgives, but as it were forgets the injury done to his glory by the sinner. It is true, God's perfections cannot admit a proper forgetting; but the believer's sins are forgotten in law; there is an irreversible act of oblivion passed upon them all in the court of heaven; and God will not only not exact the punishment of them, but will treat believers as kindly as if they had never offended him. Looking on them through Christ, he beholds them without spot. Behold the way to be secured against sin's finding you out in wrath. O unspeakable benefit! Well may we sing and say with David, Psalms 32:1-2. 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' SECONDLY, The acceptation of the person as righteous in the sight of God. God justifying a sinner does not only pardon his sin, but accepts and accounts his person righteous in his sight, 2 Corinthians 5:21. 'He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Romans 4:6. 'Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.' Romans 5:19. 'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' This is the import of justifying, namely, a declaring, accepting, or accounting one righteous, as one who being pursued before a court, gets his absolviture, and is declared an honest man in the point wherewith he was charged. There is a twofold acceptation in point of righteousness here to be carefully distinguished. (1.) An acceptation of a man's works as righteous. (2.) Of his person. All righteousness is a conformity to a law. Whatsoever comes up to what the law demands, is righteous; and what doth not is unrighteous. God hath given unto man a law, viz. the moral law, which is the eternal rule of righteousness, that never changes. So all righteousness in the sight of God is a conformity unto that law. And there is no conformity to the law, but what is so in all points. So that righteousness is a perfect conformity to the ten commands in full obedience. Now, there is, 1. An acceptation of a man's works as righteous, Galatians 3:12. 'The man that doth them shall live in them.' He that doth his works in a full conformity to the law, his works shall be accepted as righteous. But where is the man that can so do? The man Christ did so, and his works were accepted as righteous. But since God's judgment is according to truth, and he cannot account things to be what really they are not; and it is evident that even a believer's works are not righteous in the eye of the law; God neither doth nor can, in the justifying of a sinner, accept and account his works as righteous. So that this acceptation has no place in our justification. And though some of a believer's works, namely, his good works, are accepted of God, Deuteronomy 33:11.Isaiah 56:7. yet that is not in point of justification, but of sanctification; not as righteous, but as sincere tokens of their love to God, as the father accepts the work of his child, though it be not quite right, 2 Corinthians 8:12. 2. An acceptation of a man's person as righteous, Ephesians 1:6.—'Hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' This may be done without any eye to a work done by the man himself. If a man were processed for a debt he really took on, and which he never paid in his own person, yet if he can produce the discharge of the debt given to one that paid it for him, he will be absolved and the law will declare him to be owing nothing to the pursuer. Thus his person is accepted as righteous; and thus the believer is accepted as a righteous person in justification, though his works are not. To be accepted as righteous, then, is to be accounted conformable to the law, a person of whom the law has what it requires, and of whom it has no more to demand. Its demands are extremely high; universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience. But the believer,

when he is justified, is accepted, as one in respect of whom the debt is paid to the uttermost farthing, Romans 3:1-31.ult. and Romans 10:4.Colossians 2:10. This is an unspeakable benefit; for thereby, (1.) The bar in the way of abounding mercy is taken away, so that the rivers of compassion may flow towards the believer, Romans 5:1. &c. Job 33:24, &c. Many look confidently for the mercy of God, that will be disappointed; the unsatisfied law will draw a bar between them, and lock up saving mercy under the bars of God's justice and truth, which cannot be broken. But the believer being accepted as righteous, the law's mouth is stopt, justice and truth have nothing to object against mercy's flowing to them. (2.) The person is by this means adjudged to eternal life, even agreeably to the constitution of the law, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7. Acts 26:18. Life was promised in the first covenant upon the fulfilling of the law. Now, the law having all it can demand of the believer, it is very agreeable thereto, that he be adjudged to everlasting life. Thus what sets salvation far from unbelievers, contributes to the believer's security. As if two men had been bound severally in one tack, and both desire to go away at a certain time, the conditions are fulfilled for the one, but not for the other. The tack that secures the one's liberty, will hold the other fast; till the conditions be fulfilled, he cannot go. So all men were bound in the covenant of works to yield perfect obedience; but having failed, Christ substituted himself in the room of those chosen from among them to everlasting life, and gave complete obedience to the law in their name and place; on that account they are accepted and adjudged to eternal life, and that agreeably to the law, which has got all its demands of them in their Surety. But the rest being still under the law, must perish. (3.) The accusations of Satan and the clamours of an evil conscience are hereby to be stilled. See how the apostle triumphs over and bids a defiance to all the believer's accusers, Romans 8:33-34. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of 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 also maketh intercession for us.' God's sentence of justification may be opposed to the condemnation that one may be laid under from devils and men. He that has the discharge of the debt in his pocket, needs not fear what any can say or do unto him on account of the debt. (4.) Lastly, He needs not seek acceptance of his person with God by his works, for he has it already another way. This is the way hypocrites take for acceptance, that will not come to Christ. But, alas! they do not consider that they are labouring in vain; it is impossible to get it that way, Romans 9:30-32. 'What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.' It is one of the main differences betwixt the two covenants. In the first, man's works were to be accepted, and then his person; but in the second, first his person is accepted, and then his works. In the first, God dealt with man as a master with his servant, who pleases him just as he works his work; in the second, as a father with his child, who pleases his father as he is his own child, and so his work is taken off his hand, such as it is. So they that seek acceptance with God by their works, go quite contrary to the nature of the covenant of grace, and hold on the way of the covenant of works, in which one will never thrive now. But the believer is not required to seek acceptance with God in this fruitless way. So far of the parts of justification. III. The Cause of Our Justification. III. The next general head is to shew the cause of our justification, namely, the meritorious, or procuring or material cause of it. When we consider what the justification of a sinner is, well may we with wonder cry out, How can these things be! How can a

guilty sinner be pardoned by a just and jealous God! an unrighteous one accepted as righteous, by an infinitely perfect judge! We see in the world, among men, such a thing brought to pass by several means. 1. By the powerfulness of the guilty party, that the judge dare not but let them go free. Some men are so unhappy for themselves and others as to be too strong for laws, as David complains of Joab and Abishai, saying, 'These men the sons Zeruiah be too hard for me,' 2 Samuel 3:1-39.ult. and their begging a pardon is in effect the commanding of it. But what is worm-man before the omnipotency of God! where is he that is able to make head against him, that in his favour he should 'pervert judgment?' Job 34:12, &c. 2. By the weakness of the judge's understanding, that he cannot fix guilt on the guilty. Sometimes the crime is so hiddenly committed, that man cannot say, this is the guilty man. Sometimes, when the judge is convinced of the party's guilt, yet he can by no means legally fix it on him, and so there is necessity to pass him. But God is omniscient, and can never be at a loss to discover the guilty person, nor want evidence to fix it upon him, Psalms 139:7. 1 Samuel 2:3. 3. By bribes. These blind the eyes of the wise and pervert judgment. But what can we give to God, who have nothing but what is his? Job 41:11. His infinite fulness and all-sufficiency sets him beyond all possibility of affecting him thus, Job 36:19. And if we would essay to affect him with our goodness, repentance, or reformation, behold he is beyond these too, Job 35:7. 'If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?' 4. Lastly, By feud or favour prevailing over respect to justice. But with God there is no respect of persons. All are alike to him. And he neither despises any, so as not to regard what they do, which sometimes make some guilty ones get free, Job 36:5. And there is no preposterous pity with him in prejudice of justice, as there is in some men of a too soft disposition, to execute justice, Psalms 11:6-7. From all which it follows, that there is some just ground upon which a sinner believing is justified before God. And we must inquire what that is, FIRST, Negatively. It is not upon any worth or merit in the sinner himself. The text rejects that, Being justified freely by his grace. We neither are nor can be justified by our inherent righteousness, or good works. For, 1. Scripture expressly teaches, that we are not nor can be justified by our own works, but by faith, which leads us to the righteousness of another, Romans 3:20,Romans 3:28. (compare Psalms 143:2.) Galatians 2:16. All works are excluded without distinction or limitation, and faith and works are opposed; the latter being inconsistent with gospel-grace, Romans 11:6. 2. The way of a sinner's justification laid down in the gospel excludes boasting, Romans 3:27. But justification by works excludes it not, ibid. but leaves ground for it, Romans 4:2. It is the design of the gospel to exclude it, Ephesians 2:9. So that that way is opposite to the design of the gospel. 3. Lastly, All our good works are imperfect, Isaiah 64:6. and they are mixed with many sinful works, James 3:2. So that they can never make a righteousness which is truly and properly so in the eye of the law. And therefore to declare a man righteous on the account of them, would be to declare besides the truth. But 'we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth,' Romans 2:2. It must be a perfect righteousness on which a person can be justified before a holy, just God. For the relaxation of the gospel is not, that an imperfect righteousness is accepted instead of a perfect one, Romans 3:1-31.ult. This perfect righteousness can never be patched up of our imperfect pieces of obedience. Nay, suppose we could perfectly obey the law from the moment of our conversion, yea, of our birth, all is due for itself. How could that satisfy for the sin we were born with, or our sins before conversion? Repentance and tears cannot satisfy. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. And if once the law get down the sinner to be satisfied of him, how shall he get up again? And neither can they contribute so much as in part to justify us. For, (1.) At that rate the

grace of God should be so far excluded, and some room left for boasting. (2.) The cleanest of our own robes would effectually ruin us, if not washed in the Lamb's blood. And (3.) Christ's righteousness is perfect, and not dealt by shreds. SECONDLY, Positively. The righteousness of Christ is the procuring cause of our justification. In handling of this, I shall shew, 1. What Christ's righteousness is. 2. That we are justified by Christ's righteousness. 3. What way a sinner can be justified by a righteousness not wrought by himself, but by Christ. 4. How the justifying of a sinner thus consists with the honour of God's justice, and of his law. 5. How it consists with free grace. III.1. What Christ's Righteousness Is First, I shall shew what Christ's righteousness is. There is a twofold righteousness of Christ. (1.) His essential righteousness, which he had from eternity as God. This was common to all the three persons, and natural; and therefore cannot be that righteousness of Christ whereby sinners are justified. (2.) His Mediatory righteousness, peculiar to him as the Father's servant, and the Mediator betwixt God and man. This is it. And that was his conformity to the law, in the perfect obedience he gave it, when he put his neck under the yoke of the law for an elect world, to satisfy it, in all that it had to demand of them. 1. He obeyed the commands of it, Php 2:18. All the ten commands in their utmost extent had their due from him, in both tables. He was born holy, without sin; he lived without blemish, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners; and was ever doing good. His obedience was universal; as to all the commands, he kept them; perfect as to every command, in the degrees of it required by the law; constant and perpetual, without the least interruption; and voluntary and unconstrained, in respect of the principle of heartiness and willingness in it. Thus he did, as became him, fulfill all righteousness, Matthew 3:15. 2. He suffered the penalty of the law, which had been broken, Php 2:8. The elect's debt was charged upon him completely, and he answered for it. Then 'he restored that which he took not away,' Psalms 69:4. Death was the penalty, Genesis 2:17. And death in its various shapes seized on him. The forerunners of it met him at his first entrance into the world, when he was born in a very low condition, and was forced to be carried into Egypt, to save him from Herod's bloody hands. They hung about him all the days of his life, so that he was a man of sorrows, though not of sin. At length death advanced against him with all its joint forces together: and heaven, earth, and hell, all set on him together, till they brought him to the dust of death; and then he was carried death's prisoner to the grave, where he lay till it was declared the debt was paid, and the law had no more to demand. Thus he conformed himself to the law, and satisfied it in all points. And this was his righteousness, and that very righteousness upon which every believing sinner is justified, as a debtor is absolved from the creditor's libel of debt, seeing the debt is paid by a cautioner. III.2. We Are Justified by the Righteousness of Christ Secondly, I shall shew that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ. 1. This is the plain doctrine of the scriptures of the Old Testament, where he is called 'our righteousness,'Jeremiah 23:6. See Isaiah 45:24-25. The apostle, 1 Corinthians 1:30. tells us, that he is 'made righteousness to us,' not by affecting our righteousness, as he is our sanctification, for then justification and sanctification should be one and the same; but by imputation. And 2 Corinthians 5:21. 'We are made the righteousness of God in him.' This was the only righteousness Paul desired to shelter himself under, Php 3:9. In a word, he is the second Adam, Romans 5:18-19. 'Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' 2. Our justification is the justification of the ungodly, Romans 4:5; which cannot be therefore by our own righteousness, but the righteousness

of another, even of a Redeemer, according to that, Romans 5:9. 'Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;' our sins being imputed to him, and his righteousness to us, Galatians 3:13. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' 3. Lastly, There is nothing else we can lay claim to, which can satisfy the law. And it must needs be satisfied ere the sinner can be justified. For the law must be magnified and made honourable. Hence the scripture does so much notice, that by this way the law is established, which otherwise would be undermined, Romans 3:31. its righteousness fulfilled, Romans 8:4. and hath its end for perfection, Romans 10:4. III.3. How a Sinner can be Justified by Christ's Righteousness Thirdly, I proceed to shew, what way a sinner can be justified by a righteousness not wrought by himself, but by Christ. This will be clear, if ye consider these four concurring grounds. 1. Christ's suretyship which he voluntarily took on himself, Hebrews 7:22. What Christ did and suffered, he did and suffered as a public person, for an elect world, not as a private person for himself. They took on the debt, he paid it for them; what the law or justice had to demand of him, he undertook to clear for their behoof. Thus a foundation is laid for justification by his righteousness. 2. The gospel-offer wherein Christ and all his salvation and benefits are freely offered to all such as will receive the same. There he is offered in a suitableness to the needs of sinners, Revelation 3:18. And, amongst other things, Christ with his righteousness, is offered to the unrighteous; as with his sanctifying Spirit to the unholy. Thus his righteousness is in a fair way to become theirs, as a free gift, to be theirs to whom it is offered. 3. The faith of the elect, whereby Christ's righteousness becomes actually theirs, Galatians 2:16. 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' For it is the very nature of faith to receive the free gift of righteousness, and by our receiving it upon the offer, it becomes ours. But there is no way to receive Christ's righteousness, but with himself; for God gives not Christ's benefits apart from himself, but with himself, which is the way of the covenant. And hence we may see three things: (1.) That it is by faith only Christ's righteousness becomes ours, and that we have an actual interest in it, and are put in possession of it, Php 3:9.—'The righteousness which is by faith.' Whatever foundation may be laid for it in the decree of God's election, and in Christ's satisfaction in our stead, yet it is not but by faith that we are possessed of it, or can plead it before the Lord. For as Adam's sin cannot hurt us till we have a being in him naturally; so Christ's righteousness cannot profit us till we be in him by faith. (2.) How Christ's righteousness becomes ours by faith. Faith unites us to Christ in the way of the spiritual marriage-covenant, Ephesians 2:17. Being united to him, we have a communion with him in all the benefits of his purchase, and so in his righteousness, which is one of the chief of them. He himself is ours by faith; and so all that is his is ours for our good. This union being most real, the communion is so too. And hence we are said to be 'crucified with him,' Galatians 2:20; 'buried with him,' Romans 6:4; yea, 'raised with him,' Ephesians 2:6. (3.) How we are justified by faith. Not that faith is our righteousness; for our righteousness is not our faith, but we get it by faith, Php 3:9. We are justified by it instrumentally, as we say one is enriched by a marriage, when by it he gets what makes him rich. So that faith is that whereby the soul is married to Christ; and being married to him, has communion with him in his righteousness, which justifies the person before God. 4. God's imputation, whereby he reckons Christ's righteousness to be the believer's in law: as the judge sustains the husband's payment for the wife's, and so absolves her from any action the pursuer can have against her for the debt,

Romans 4:6. This imputation or reckoning of the judge is according to the truth of the thing, Christ's righteousness being really the believer's righteousness antecedently to the imputation, namely, by faith. So that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, because it is really his; and it is not therefore really his, because it is imputed to him. III.4. How Justification of Sinners Consists with Justice Fourthly, I come now to shew how the justifying of a sinner thus consists with the honour of God's justice, and of his law. Very well does it so consist; for God's justice and law have more honour by Christ's obedience and death, than they could have had by the obedience or death of the justified party. 1. What are all the creatures together in comparison of the Son of God, in point of greatness and excellency? Did David's men say of him, who was but a creature of their own kind, 'Thou art worth ten thousand of us?' 2 Samuel 18:3. so may not we say of him, who was the Father's fellow, Thou art worth ten thousand worlds of us? When a king puts his own Son, and heir to the crown, to death, for transgressing the laws, his justice is more conspicuous, and the law more honoured, than by the execution of a thousand ordinary malefactors. So that we may say, that God's justice, and respect to his law, appeared more in mount Calvary, than it does in hell; for in the one was God, in the other were creatures groaning out for a broken law. 2. Suppose the company of the justified had, for the honour of the law and justice, been all sent to hell together; yet they would ever have been but satisfying, they never could have come up to the full satisfaction, so as there might be no more to demand of them. For infinite justice can never be completely satisfied by a finite creature; and therefore hell-torments are eternal. But here, by Jesus Christ, justice gets the least and last farthing paid down? and the law has till it can demand no more, John 19:30. 3. Lastly, By Christ's obedience and death, law and justice are honoured both actively and passively. Now, if Adam had stood and been justified by his works, they had been only glorified actively. If the now justified had been damned for their sin, and suffered for it for ever, they [God's law & justice] had been only glorified passively; but now, by this way of the Mediator's suretyship, they are glorified both ways. He has obeyed the law's commands to the least. He has suffered the wrath and curse of God to the utmost, which the creature could never have done; and borne it with that patience, submission, and resignation, and is quite beyond the reach of a mere creature, Isaiah 53:7. So the believer's justification is on the surest grounds. The justice of God and his law consent to it, as that which is more for their honour than the ruin of the sinner. III.5. Justification By Christ's Righteousness Consistent with Free Grace Fifthly, I come now to shew how the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ consists with free grace. If our justification be thus purchased by the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ, how is it of free grace? I answer, Very well. For, 1. God accepted of a surety, when he might have held by the sinner himself, and insisted that the soul that sinned might die, Romans 5:8. What was it but free grace that moved him, when the neck of all the elect was upon the block, to allow it to rise up without receiving the fatal blow, and accepting of a Surety in their room? Could any man oblige the Judge to this? God did this freely. 2. God himself provided the Surety, John 3:16. When Isaac lay bound on the altar, God provided the ram for the burnt-offering. What could man have done to get a cautioner when he broke, in the first covenant? Among all the beasts of the field there could not be found an atoning sacrifice, Psalms 40:6. All the angels in heaven could not have afforded a cautioner. But free grace set infinite wisdom on work to find out one, which pitched on the Son of God, Psalms 89:19. So the Father gives his own Son, and the Son takes on man's nature, and pays the debt. What is there here but riches of grace to the justified sinner? So it is God's own righteousness, Php 3:9. freely given to us. The which if it had not, as the tree fell, it

behoved to have lain for ever. 3. Lastly, God demands nothing of us for it. It is a rich purchase, a dear purchase, the price of blood: but the righteousness and the justification are given to us most freely through faith. That is, we Have it, for Take and have. And the very hand wherewith we receive it, namely faith, is the free gift of God unto us, Ephesians 2:8. So that most evident it is, that we are justified freely by his grace. IV. Practical Improvement I come now to make some practical improvement of this important subject. USE I. Of information. From what is said, learn, 1. That they are poor fools who have slight thoughts of sin and guilt. How many think very little of unpardoned guilt? There is a band lying on their head, obliging them to bear God's wrath for their sin; yet they rest in peace. They are lying under a sentence of condemnation, and know not how soon they may be led out to execution; yet they are at ease. They are drawing on more guilt daily without fear, and so making their bonds stronger. O, Sirs! look here and see the evil of sin, the dreadful nature of guilt. Nothing less could take sin away, and break asunder these bands, than the death of our Redeemer. Behold it in this glass, and be afraid of it. 2. How ill does it set us to have cheap thoughts of pardon! Numbers 14:17,Numbers 14:19. 'God forgive me,' is a common word in some people's mouths, set off with a laugh. Most people fancy it is an easy thing to get a pardon. They know God is full of mercy, Christ of bowels, no more ado but to make a confession, pray to God to forgive them, and all is well; as if they might live like lions, and then leap like lambs out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. But if ever ye get a pardon, ye will change your mind, and find it has cost Christ dear; it is written in his blood, and will cost you broken bones ere ye obtain it. 3. Faith is absolutely necessary, Romans 5:1. There is no justification without faith, and no access to heaven for the unjustified. While you continue in a state of unbelief, guilt girds you about as cords of death. And till ye believe and come to Christ, none of them all will be loosed, but they will weigh you down to destruction. O then come to Christ, and believe, accept of the Cautioner in the covenant. Without union with him, ye can have no share in his righteousness, and without faith no union with Christ. 4. No sin is so great, but one may be justified from it, if he will come to Christ, and close with him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. It is Christ's righteousness upon which a sinner is justified, and that is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness of infinite value; and no sin is so great but it will swallow it up. There is none so broad but this white raiment will cover it. No guilt so strong but this will break it. 5. Most miserable will their case be, that shall be left to feel their own weight, Psalms 94:1-23.ult. He 'shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.' Many see not their need of Christ and his righteousness now: but when that falls on them for their own sin, that fell on him for the sins of those he bare, they will find their punishment like Cain's greater than what they can bear. What the Cautioner was put to in paying the debt of sin, may fright every one with the thoughts of their answering for their own. 6. Lastly, Happy is the case of the justified, Psalms 32:1. They are secured as to their state, no more under wrath, Romans 8:1. Their eternal salvation is sure, and can never fail, Romans 8:30. They have got over the gulph of condemnation, and shall never fall therein. Whom God justifies now, he will not condemn hereafter. USE II. Of trial. By what is said, ye may try your state, whether ye be justified or not. And ye have reason to put this matter to trial accurately and exactly. For, 1. One thing is sure, that every man is once under a sentence of condemnation, Ephesians 2:3.Galatians 3:10. Now, what course have ye taken to get from under this? and if ye have been aiming at it, have ye carried your point, or not? No man is carried out of the state of condemnation in a morning dream; most men abide in the condemned state they were born in. O try it, whether ye be brought out of it or not. 2. As your state is in this life in

point of justification, so it will be determined at death and the last day, Ecclesiastes 9:10. This life is the time of trial; in the other, the judgment will pass upon men according to what they have been in this world. Now the door of mercy stands open for pardons; but death being once come, there is no more access to a pardon. As the tree falls, it must lie. 3. Men are very apt to mistake their state in this matter. Many draw a pardon to themselves, that God will not set his seal to, and all it serves for is to blind their own eyes, Isaiah 44:20. The foolish virgins dreamed very confidently of peace with God; but they met with a sad disappointment. They called themselves the friends of the Bridegroom, but he shut the door on them as on his enemies. 4. Lastly, A mistake in this point is very dangerous. It makes people let the time of obtaining a pardon slip, as fancying they have it already. The foolish virgins might have got oil to their lamps, if they had seen the want of it, ere it was out of time. And thus it brings a ruining surprise while people sleeping to death, in their dreams of peace, are awakened by the noise of war that God will have with them for ever and ever, without any more possibility of truce. Now, ye may try it by the following things. 1. Have ye been apprehended, sisted before God the Judge, and brought to a reckoning of your sins? No man gets out his absolviture before the Lord, till he appear and answer to his libel. This is necessary to make the sinner flee to Christ; for this end the law was given, and for this end it is brought into the conscience, Galatians 3:24. That state of sin which the soul never was made truly sensible of, does without doubt continue. They that never saw themselves in a state of condemnation are to this day under it. To what end should one have looked for healing to the brazen serpent, that were not stung with the fiery serpents? If the law has not had this effect on you to let you see your sin, and stopped your mouth before the Lord, ye are not come to Christ for justification. But if ye have seen your sin and state of condemnation by nature, and so have fled for mercy to Jesus Christ, then ye may conclude ye are justified. 2. I would ask you, Have ye been carried freely out of yourselves to Jesus Christ for righteousness, renouncing all other confidences in whole and in part, Php 3:7-8? There are many who, being convinced of sin, fall down and beg pardon, and hope for it upon their prayers, repentance, and reformation: but they never consider how the law shall be answered by a perfect righteousness. But the justified person sees, that there is no pardon to be got, without a righteousness that will satisfy the law, and that no work of his can do that; therefore he lays hold on Christ for his righteousness, and pleads that for pardon. They unite with the Mediator by faith, and so he spreads his skirt over them. They get in under the covert of the Mediator’s blood, and place their confidence there, believing that it is of sufficiency to shield them from wrath, and trusting upon his righteousness for that end, Php 3:3. They continue not in mere suspense, James 1:6-7. but so wrestle against doubting, as to cast their anchor, and lay their weight for eternity, upon the righteousness of Christ. 3. The dominion and reigning power of sin is broken in the justified, Romans 6:14. Where the condemning power of sin, is removed, its reigning power is also taken away. If the condemned man get his remission, he is taken out of his irons, his prison, and the jailor’s power; and so the pardoned sinner is no more taken captive by Satan at his will, 2 Timothy 2:1-26.ult. Will the liar lie on, the swearer swear on, the drunkard drink on, the formalist still hold on with his mere form of godliness, and hope that God has pardoned him? No; let no man deceive himself. Those chains of reigning lusts that are still rattling about thee, declare thee to be yet a condemned man, Romans 8:1-2. Doubt ye not but if ye were justified, ye would be washed? 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. To pretend to the pardon of sin which thou art still living and going on in, is practical blasphemy, as if Christ were the minister of sin; it is a turning the grace of God into licentiousness, which will bring a heavy vengeance at length. But if the

reigning power of sin, be broken in thee, thou art a justified man; it is a sign thou art healing, when the strength of the disease of sin is abating. 4. Habitual tenderness of conscience with respect to sin, temptations, and appearance of evil, is a good sign of a justified state, Acts 24:16. Burnt bairns dread the fire; and the man who has brought himself under a sentence of death, if he escape it may be thought, he will beware of falling into the snare again, Isaiah 38:17. compare Isaiah 38:15. Justified persons may fall into acts of untenderness many a time; but habitual untenderness is a black mark, when people habitually and ordinarily take to themselves a sinful latitude in their thoughts, words, or actions. It is a sad sign that sin has never been made very bitter to them, when they can so easily go into it. It is easy to pretend to tenderness in opinions, and with respect to church-differences; but would to God there appeared more tenderness among us in matters of morality, that there were more sobriety among us, that people who have money to spare, would give it to the poor, and not lay it out in a way that God has so often visibly blasted, or spend it on their lusts; that men would not by their presence or otherwise encourage penny-weddings (condemned both by the law of the land and the church,) these nurseries of profaneness, which have so often among us left a stink behind them in the nostrils of truly tender persons, and before a holy God. I would recommend to you the apostle's general rule, Php 4:8. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' 5. Lastly, The fruits of faith in a holy life. We are justified by faith without works; but that faith that justifies is always followed with good works, Acts 15:9. If the curse be taken away, under which the soul remains barren, it will become fruitful in the fruits of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23. Our faith justifies our persons as it receives Christ with his righteousness; but our faith must be justified by our works, i.e. it must be by our good works evidenced to be true faith. Therefore the apostle James disputes against that faith that is without works, shewing it to be no true justifying faith, James 2:17-18. There is a difference betwixt justification and sanctification, but they are inseparable companions. And no man can evidence his justification without the fruits of holiness. Examine yourselves by these things, what state ye are in before God. USE III. Of exhortation. This I shall address both to sinners and saints. First, To sinners yet in the state of sin and wrath. Here is good news of pardon and acceptance with God for you. I would exhort you to be concerned to get out of the state of wrath and condemnation; and while God is sitting on a throne of grace, do not slip the opportunity, but sue out your absolviture from before the Lord in his own way. Take no rest till ye be justified before God through Christ. To make way for this exhortation, I will lay before you the following motives. Motive. 1. While you are out of a justified state, a sentence of condemnation stands against thee in the court of heaven, and thou knowest not how soon it may be executed, Galatians 3:10. John 3:18. and ult. If thou wert under a sentence of death by the laws of men, wouldst thou not bestir thyself for a pardon, if there were any hope? But, poor soul, thou art under a sentence of eternal death; and yet thou livest at ease! God's law has condemned thee as a malefactor, his truth confirms the sentence, and justice craves execution. All things are ready for it. Psalms 7:12-13. When thou liest down, thou hast no security that it shall not be executed ere thou arise; and when thou goest out, thou hast no security that it shall not be executed ere thou come in. Only long-suffering procures thee a reprieve one day after another, to see if thou wilt sue out a pardon. But, as secure as thou art, the sword of justice hangs over thy head by the hair of long-tired patience; and if that break, thou art a dead man. Motive. 2. A pardon and acceptance with God is

not so easily obtained as people generally think. God gives pardon freely, yet none come by it lightly. They that get it, get it so as they are taught to prize the mercy, Micah 7:18. They that know not the evil of sin nor the holy just nature of God, and that were never pressed with the sense of unpardoned guilt, think it a very easy thing to get a pardon, as if there were no more but to ask and receive. But I would have you to consider, (1.) The justifying and pardoning of a sinner is one of the greatest works of God. It is a greater work than to make a world. God had no more ado but to say, in the creation, 'Let there be light, &c. and there was.' But when sinners were to be absolved, justice stands up for satisfaction. The truth of God for the honour of a broken law, wisdom is set awork to find out a way how pardoning mercy may get a vent; and for that cause the Son of God pays down the price of blood to buy the absolviture. If God could have absolved the sinner from guilt and punishment by a bare word, how would he have passed by that easy way, and fetched a compass by the blood of his own Son? John 3:16. And after all it is a work of power to be exercised according to the greatness of mercy, Numbers 14:17,Numbers 14:19. (2.) Sin is the greatest of evils, no wonder it be hard to take it away. It is of all things most contrary to the holy nature of God. Habakkuk 1:13. When thou goest on in thy sin, thou art engaged against all the attributes of God. It is a daring of his justice, an invading of his sovereignty, a defying of his power, an abusing of his patience, and a despising of his love, mercy, and goodness. It contradicts his will; thereby the potsherds strive against their Maker, and lusts are set up against his holy law. It robs him of the glory due to him from his creatures, and turns to his dishonour, When God had perfected the frame of the world, and made man and all the creatures for his glory, sin entering marred the whole frame, and made the workmanship of his own hands dishonour him. O! is it not a great work then to get a pardon, and all these injuries buried in forgetfulness with a holy jealous God! (3.) God's elect have endured sad breakings of heart from the time they are made sensible of sin, till they have got their absolviture from it, Acts 2:37. They have known the terror of the Lord, to the breaking of their bones, ere they could get a glimpse of his reconciled countenance. Think ye as light of pardon as ye will, if ever the Lord come to give you a spiritual medicine to cause you sweat out the poison of sin, it will make you sick at the heart, if it bring you not to the last gasp, Isaiah 33:1-24.ult. (4.) Lastly, If ever ye get a pardon, there will be an awful solemnity at the giving of it, Psalms 89:14. and it will be a very strong faith that will not receive it with a trembling hand, Hosea 11:10. compare Hosea 3:1-5.ult. 'They shall fear the Lord,' Heb. 'fear to the Lord.' For God gives no pardons but what are written in the blood of a Redeemer, sufficiently testifying his detestation of the crime; none are got but through the wounds of a Redeemer. So that the very throne of grace stands on justice fully satisfied; and thou shalt be made to say when thou gettest the pardon, as Jacob did of the place where he had slept all night, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,' Genesis 28:17. Therefore look on it as a matter of the greatest weight, that will not be slightly managed, and to purpose too. Motive. 3. Consider the dreadful disadvantages that attend an unjustified state. While ye are unjustified, 1. Ye can have no access to God, nor communion with him, Romans 3:3. Unpardoned guilt is a partition-wall betwixt God and you, Isaiah 59:2. It stands as the angel with the flaming sword to guard the tree of life, that ye can have no access to it. It is true, ye may attend public ordinances, and go about private and secret duties; but they are all lost, as to communion with God, in the great gulph of an unpardoned state. Ye cannot have a comfortable word out of his mouth, nor a smile of his face. 2. Ye can have no peace with God, Romans 5:1. What Jehu said to Joram, God says to every unjustified sinner pretending peace with him, 'What peace, so long as

the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?' 2 Kings 9:22. It is sin that makes God an enemy to the work of his own hands; and while it is not forgiven, there can be no reconciliation. How can they think they can have peace with God whom his law condemns? What peace ye have in your consciences, arises from stupidity and presumption; it is stolen, and is none of God's allowance, Isaiah 57:1-21.ult. Neither could ye command it, or retain it, if ye saw your case. 3. Ye can have no fruits of holiness. The conscience must be purged, ere one can serve God acceptably, Hebrews 9:44. or do any work good in God's sight, 1 Timothy 1:5. Justification and sanctification are inseparable, and a justified state goes before a holy life; 'for to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,'Romans 4:5. While a man is unpardoned, the curse lies on him; and it is a blasting withering curse, like that on the fig-tree, that no fruit of holiness can grow where it comes. For it stops the communication of sanctifying influences; and the earth shall sooner bring forth its fruits while the influences of the heavens are restrained, than a soul shall do any good work without the influences of Christ's Spirit, John 15:5. 4. All you do is turned to sin by this means, Psalms 14:1. A soul unjustified, is as a tainted vessel that turns every liquor that is put into it. Hence your very civil actions are turned to sin, Proverbs 21:4. natural actions, Zechariah 7:6. yea, and your religious actions too; Proverbs 15:1.Isaiah 66:3. For as the purest liquor put into a vessel for base uses is loathed, so are the best performances of an unpardoned sinner, by a holy God. For whatever they be as to the matter of them, they are selfish and hateful as to the principle end, and manner. 5. Lastly, Hence your accounts are running on every day and moment to the avenging justice of God, Romans 2:5. Thou art still deeper and deeper in that fearful debt; the cords of thy guilt are growing stronger and stronger. Thy crimes and grounds of condemnation are multiplied more and more; and though it is only dying for all, yet the more thy guilt is increased, the more will be thy punishment. It is true, that every one is sinning daily; but a justified person's debts are not charged upon him for eternal wrath, but temporary chastisements; so that theirs is but an account of pennies, while thine is that of talents. Motive. 4. Consider the unspeakable advantages of a pardoned justified state. He that is in that state, is a happy man, whatever his case be otherwise in the world, Psalms 22:1.—He may meet with many crosses in a present world, but the white stone given him of God will make him happy for all that, Habakkuk 3:17. One may be rich, yet reprobate; his portion fat, but his soul lean; applauded on the earth, but damned in hell. These things come from God's hand; and the crown of worldly felicity set on with his bare hand, he will kick off with his foot at length. But a pardon comes from his heart, as an eternal love token, Romans 11:29. O! let the happiness of a justified state engage you to seek after it. Get into the state of pardon; and, 1. Ye shall have peace with God, Romans 5:1. Sin is the only controversy betwixt God and a soul; when that is removed, the parties are reconciled, and meet together in peace. God justifying the sinner, lays by the legal enmity he bare to him, while he lived in a state of sin. He pursues him no more with wrath or curse. The heavens that are now black above your heads shall clear up, and ye shall enjoy a pleasant sunshine, if the cloud of guilt were dispelled. O, Sirs! do ye not value peace with God? If ye do, then seek to be in this state. 2. It will bring you other peace besides. Peace of conscience follows upon a justified state. Unpardoned guilt makes a foul and condemning conscience, which gnaws a man like a worm. But when one gets his conscience sprinkled with the Redeemer's blood, and his sin pardoned, the conscience is cleansed, Hebrews 9:14. And then it is turned to a good conscience, which sings sweetly in a man's bosom, 2 Corinthians 1:12. Yea, ye shall have peace with the creatures, that are at war with the unpardoned sinner, Job 5:23. Having

thus gained the favour of the Master of the great family, the servants shall all turn to be your friends. 3. Ye shall have access to God with confidence and holy boldness, Ephesians 3:12. 1 John 3:21. God shall no more sit on a tribunal of strict justice to you, with the flaming sword before him; but on a throne of grace, with a rainbow round about it, Revelation 4:3. And ye may come to him with all your wants, complaints, &c. as unto a friend, yea, a Father in Christ, confidently expecting all good things from him, Job 33:24,Job 33:26. For being justified, ye have a satisfaction to plead, upon which he can deny you no good thing; ye are clothed with a righteousness that makes you spotless, and are under a covert, where love and favour shine continually. 4. Ye shall be delivered from the dominion of sin, Romans 6:14. and be made to bring forth the fruits of holiness, Colossians 2:13. As soon as ever the remission is passed the seals, so soon the orders are given to deliver the prisoner, to beat off his chains, and open the prison-door, and set him at liberty. The apostle tells us, that 'the strength of sin is the law,' 1 Corinthians 15:56. namely, the law condemning and cursing the sinner; so that the sinner being under the curse, sin reigns in him with a full sway, as the thorns and briers in the cursed ground. But the law's curse and condemning power being removed in justification, sin loses its strength. And the blessing coming in its room, the soul is made fruitful in holiness. Hence faith's sanctifying virtue is so much insisted on in the word, Acts 15:9. 5. It will take the venom out of your crosses, and the strongest afflictions ye meet with, 1 Corinthians 15:55. The venom of afflictions is the curse in a cross; but pardon takes out that. A bee-sting your troubles may have after that, but the serpent's sting shall no more be found in them. A pardoned state sanctifies crosses to a man; and a sanctified cross is better than an unsanctified comfort. A loss with God's favour, is more than an enjoyment with God's wrath. 6. It will sweeten your mercies with an additional sweetness, and make a small mercy more valuable than the greatest earthly comfort an unpardoned sinner can have, Psalms 37:16. Who would not chuse to live at peace in a cottage, on coarse fare, than to be in the case of one under a sentence of death, liberally fed in a castle till the execution-day? A mercy without a pardon will go a short way; the man may cry, 'There is death in the pot,' Malachi 2:2. But a pardon puts a blessing in a mercy, purifies and refines it, putting a stamp of God's good will on it, Genesis 33:11. 7. It will make all things work together for your good, Romans 8:28. God's wrath and anger against a person mars all to him. It makes every thing work for his ruin: the unpardoned man's crosses are curses, and his good things as well as his evil things work against him, Proverbs 1:32. But by the Lord's favour all things shall work through grace to bring the believer to glory. God is for him, who then can be against him? Whether the wind blow on his face, or on his back, it shall forward him to the happy harbour. 8. It is the way to live comfortably, Isaiah 40:1-2. None in all the world have so good a reason to live comfortably as the justified person. He that gets the white stone of the Lord's absolviture, if he can but look on it, his soul may rejoice within him. If all things in the world were going wrong, he has that to comfort him, that God is his friend. However little he may have in hand, he has all the heavenly inheritance in hope. The uncomfortable life the pardoned sinner has, arises from want of consideration; but the more clearly he sees his matters, he will have the more comfort. 9. Lastly, It is the way to die safely and comfortably too. The pardoned sinner may triumph over death and the grave, Romans 8:38-39. 1 Corinthians 15:55. When death comes to him, he has his discharge, it cannot harm him. As for the tribunal, he cannot be condemned there, for he is already justified. He shall swim safe through these dark waters, for the weight of guilt is removed, he cannot sink in them. Motive. 5. A pardon is in your offer. There is none of us all under the sentence of condemnation but may get it reversed, if we will come to Christ, and sue out an

absolviture in the Lord's own way, Isaiah 55:7. He is a just God we have to do with, but there is a way how pardoning mercy may reach us in a full consistency with justice. The white flag of peace does yet hang out, and the market of free grace stands open. There is an act of grace and full indemnity through Jesus Christ proclaimed in the gospel. Come in, sinners, and take the benefit of it. Why will ye stand out, and despise the King of Heaven's free pardon? Objection. My sins are so great, that I can have no hope of pardon, whatever others may. Answer. Neither the greatness nor the multitude of your sins, nor your backsliding into them again and again, put you beyond the reach of pardon. For observe, I pray you, the foundation of pardon is Christ's righteousness, and that is the righteousness of God, Romans 10:3. Now, your sins are the sins of a creature; and shall not the righteousness of God be able to remove the unrighteousness of the creature? And it is to all, and upon all that believe, Romans 3:22. and remember, as the one abounds, the other superabounds,Romans 5:20. God is pleased to heap words of grace one upon another to put tempted sinners in hopes of pardon, Joel 2:13. 'Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil,' Isaiah 1:18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'—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 upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' And he has set up many instances of pardoning mercy, that none may despair of finding mercy that will come to him in his own way. Adam, the leading sinner in the world, was pardoned. Manasseh, who gave up himself to the most gross sins of devilry, murder, &c. yet received a pardon. Paul, who was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, obtained mercy. And the very Jews that murdered the Lord of glory, were pardoned through his blood. These instances of mercy are indeed abused to the encouraging of sinners to go on in their sin: but they were never designed for that; and it is a dreadful sign, when the very gospel-news of pardon become a trap and a snare. But God designed them for thy encouragement, O trembling sinner, that would fain come to God through Christ for pardon, if thou durst; and by these he bids thee welcome, Ephesians 2:7. Come forward, then, and sue for thy pardon. Motive. 6. The time of pardoning grace will not last, Isaiah 55:6. 'Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' The day will come when God will not be intreated, when abused patience will break forth into fury, Luke 13:24-25. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are.' Beware lest ye sit your day of grace, and it come to that, ye find no place for repentance, though ye should seek it carefully with tears. Remember those that were bidden to the supper, and shifted, and were excluded, Luke 14:24. Delay no more. A moment's delay may be an eternal loss. Lastly, I beseech you remember, that your eternal state depends on your being justified now or not. If ye be justified now, ye shall be saved eternally; if not, ye are lost for ever. And how dreadful will the condemnation of those be, who by slighting an offered pardon trample on the blood of Christ, which was shed for the remission of sins! Directions I shall conclude this use of exhortation with a few directions. 1. Labour to get your hearts wrought up to a deep concern for a pardoned state. And for this cause, believe your miserable state by nature, that ye are once condemned. Take a view of the holy, righteous law, and your innumerable

transgressions of it, besides your sinful nature. Look to the flaming justice of God? behold it in the case of the damned, in the case of Christ suffering, and see what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. 2. Go to God in Christ, and confess your sins, and condemn yourselves. Lay them out before God with shame and confusion of face, with their several aggravations. Make a full and free confession, insisting most on those sins that have been most dishonouring to God in you. Acknowledge yourselves justly condemned by the law, and God to be righteous, if he should put the sentence into execution. Lastly, Solemnly and sincerely accept of Christ in the covenant of grace held forth in the gospel. Receive him with his righteousness, and enter under the covert of his blood. And lay all your guilt over on him, believing his ability and willingness to remove it. And accepting of Christ for justification and sanctification, ye shall be accepted and pardoned. Exhortation. 2. To justified persons. This privilege calls you to several duties. 1. Love the Lord, and love him much, for much is forgiven you. This may be oil to that holy flame, and therefore love will continue in heaven for ever. 2. Be of a forgiving disposition, Ephesians 4:1-32.ult. 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.' The same Saviour that brought in remission of sins, binds us to love our enemies. And the bitter revengeful spirit against those we think have wronged us, is a sad sign that our own sin is unforgiven of God, Matthew 4:12. 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' They who have found what a dreadful weight sin unpardoned is, and have at length got it removed, will thereby be helped to forgive. 3. Walk humbly. Ye are justified, but it is by the righteousness of another. Ye are pardoned, but it was procured to you by the satisfaction of a Saviour. Your debt is paid, your discharge is got up; but thanks to free grace, not to you, for it. 4. Bear your troubles and crosses in a world patiently.—Your life that was forfeited by sin is safe by grace; therefore take thankfully any troubles you meet with. For why should a living man complain, especially one that deserved to die, and yet is adjudged to life? 5. Lastly, Walk tenderly. God pardoning a sinner, dismisseth him as Christ did the penitent adulteress, John 12:11. 'Go, and sin no more.' Let not your broken bones be forgotten, but walk softly all your years. And if ye be pardoned, shew it by your holy and tender walk. Footnotes: 1. See the author's Miscellaneous Questions, quest. 2.

Chapter 106

S. Of Man's Chief End and Happiness

Of Man’s Chief End and Happiness

THOMAS BOSTON 1 Corinthians 10:31...Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Psalms 73:25-26...Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

KNOWLEDGE is a necessary foundation of faith and holiness; and where ignorance reigns in the mind, there is confusion in the heart and life. We have the word of truth in our hands, and many methodical systems of divine truths, amongst which the Shorter Catechism, composed by the Reverend Assembly of divines at Westminster, in pursuance of the solemn league and covenant, as a part of the then intended uniformity between the three nations, is deservedly reckon the chief. This I shall endeavour to explain with all possible brevity and perspecuity, that ye may have a view of those divine truths, with the reason of them. And this I have thought it the more necessary to do, in order that your minds may be established in the truth, as our time is like to be a time of trial, wherein ye may be exposed to many snares, and so be in danger of apostasy. In the first of the texts which I have read, ye have, 1. The chief end of human actions, the glory of God: that is the scope of which all we think, or do, should tend; this is the point or common center, in which all should meet. 2. The extent of it. It is not only some of our actions, but all of them, of what kind soever, that must be directed to this end. This, then is man’s chief duty. In the second text we have, The Psalmist’s chief desire, and what he points at as his only true happiness; that is, the enjoyment of God. He takes God for and instead of all, that in him alone his soul may rest. 2. The reason of this is taken from (1.) The creature’s emptiness, both in body and in spirit, Psalms 73:25 (2.) From God’s fulness and sufficiency: and this is amplified by the eternity of it, my portion for ever. From both texts the following doctrine natively follows. Doct. "Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever. "In handling this doctrine, I shall speak,

I.

To the glorifying of God, which is one part of man’s chief end.

II.

To the enjoyment of God forever, wherein man’s chief happiness consists, and; which he is to seek as his chief good.

I. I shall speak to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man’s chief end. And here I shall show, 1. The nature of glorifying God.

2. In what respect God’s glory is man’s chief end.

3. The extent of this glorifying of God.

4. The reason of it.

First, I shall shew the nature of glorifying God. To glorify, is either to make glorious, or to declare to be glorious. God glorifies, i.e. makes angels or men glorious; but man cannot make God glorious, for he is not capable of any additional glory, being in himself infinitely glorious, Job 35:7. Hence it is plain, that God gets no advantage to himself by the best works of men, the profit of holiness redounding entirely ourselves, Acts 17:25, Psalms 16:2.

God is glorified, then, only declaratively; he is glorified when his glory is declared. This is done two ways. Objectively, by the creatures inanimate and irrational. Thus the heavens declare the glory of God, Psalms 19:1. This the creatures do, while they afford matter of praise to God, as a violin is fit to make music, though there must be a hand to play on it ere it can sound. Man declares his glory also actively. And this he ought to do,

1. By his heart, 1 Corinthians 6:20. Glorify God in your spirit. Honouring God with the lips, not with the heart, is but a very lame and unacceptable performance. He ought to be glorified by our understanding, taking him up in the glory which the scripture reveals him in, thinking highly of him, and esteeming him above all other persons or things, Psalms 73:25. So they that know him not, can never glorify him: and they that esteem any person or thing more than, or as much as him, dishonour him. We glorify him by our wills, choosing him as our portion and our chief good, as he really is in himself; by our affections loving him, and rejoicing and delighting in him above every other.

2. By his lips, Psalms 1:2-3 "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." Therefore man’s tongue is called his glory, Psalms 16:9 not only because it serves him for speech, which exalts him above the brutes, but because it is given him as a proper instrument for speaking forth the glory of God. So that it must needs be a strange perverting of the tongue, to set it against the heavens, and let it loose to the dishonour of God, and fetter it as to his glory.

3. By his 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." A holy life is a life of light; it is a shining light, to let a blind world see the glory of God. Sin darkens the glory of God, draws a veil over it. David’s sin made the enemies of God to blaspheme. The study of holiness says, God is holy; mourning for every slip says, God is spotless; walking holily in all manner of conversation, within and without, says,God is omniscient and omnipresent. As when men find a well-ordered family, that tells what a man the master of it is.

SECONDLY, I proceed to show in what respects God’s glory is man’s chief end.

First, it is man’s end,

1. It is the end which God aimed at when he made man, Proverbs 16:4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself," Romans 11:36, For of him, and through him, and to him are all things." Every rational agent proposes to himself an end in working, and the most perfect the highest end. Now God is the most perfect Being, and his glory the noblest end. God is not actively glorified by all men, and therefore he surely did not design it; but he designed to have glory from them, either by them or on them; and so it will be. Happy they who glorify him by their actings, that they may not glorify him by their eternal sufferings

2. It is the end of man as God’s work. Man was made fit for glorifying God, Ecclesiastes 7:29. "God made man upright;" as a well-tuned instrument, or as a house conveniently built, though never inhabited. The very fabric of man’s body, whereby he looks upward, while the breast look downward, is palpable evidence of this.

3. It is that which man should aim at, the mark to which he should direct all he does, 1 Corinthians 10:31, the text. This is what we should continually have in our eye, the grand design we should be carrying on in the world, Psalms 16:8. "I have set the Lord always before me," says David.

Secondly, It is man’s chief end, that which God chiefly aimed at, the chief end of man as God’s work, and that which man should chiefly aim at. God made man for other ends, as to govern, use, and dispose of other creatures in the earth, sea, and air, wisely, soberly, and mercifully, Genesis 1:26. Man was fitted for these ends, and a man may propose them lawfully to himself, seeing God has set them before him; but still these are but subordinate ends to his glory.

There are some ends which men propose to themselves, which are simply unlawful, as to satisfy their revenge, their lust, their covetousness. These are not capable of subordination to the glory of God, who hates robbery for burnt-offering. But there are other ends which are indeed in themselves lawful, yet become sinful, if they be not set in their due place, that is, subordinate to the glory of God. Now, God’s glory is made our chief end, when these three things concur.

1. When whatever end we have in our actions, the glory of God is still one of our ends in acting. We may eat and drink for the nourishment of our bodies; but this must not jostle out our respect to the glory of God. If the nourishment of our bodies be the only end of our eating and drinking, it is sinful, and out of the due order.

2. It must not only be our end, but it must be our main and principal end, that which we chiefly design. When God’s glory is our chief end, all other ends that we propose to ourselves will be down-weighed by this; all other sheaves must bow to that sheaf: as a diligent servant designs to please both the master and his steward, but chiefly the master. But when, on the contrary, a man eats and drinks (for instance) more for the nourishment of his body than for God’s glory, it is plain, that God’s glory is not the chief end of the man in that action. Hence we read, 2 Timothy 3:4. of some that are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

3. When it is the ultimate end, the last end, the top and perfection of what we design, beyond which we have no more view, and to which all other ends are made subservient, and as means to that end. Thus we should eat that our bodies may be refreshed; we should desire that our bodies may be refreshed, that we may be the more capable to serve and glorify God in our stations. Thus we are obliged to seek our own salvation, that God may be glorified; and not to seek God’s glory only that we may be saved; for that is to make the glory of God a stepping-stone to our own safety.

Thirdly, I come now to show the extent of this duty. Respect to the glory of God is as salt that must be served up with every dish. The great work of our life is to glorify him; it is the end of our first and of our second creation, Isaiah 43:21. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." We must be for God, Hosea 3:3. and live to him. This must be the end.

1. Of our natural actions, 1 Corinthians 10:31, eating, sleeping, walking. We are under a law as to these things. We may not eat and drink as we please, more than pray as we please, Zechariah

7:6. All these things must be done in subserviency to the glory of God. These things must be done that we may live, and living may glorify God; and when we can do it without them in heaven, then none of these things shall be done.

2. Of our civil actions, working our work, buying and selling, Ephesians 6:7, Proverbs 21:4. It was one of sins of the old world, that they were eating; the word is properly used of beast eating their food: they had no higher end in it than beast; and marrying, a thing in itself lawful, but they had no eye to God in it.

3. Of our moral and religious actions, Zechariah 7:5. We must pray, hear, for God's glory. This is such a necessary ingredient in our actions, that none of them are truly good and acceptable to God without it, Zechariah 7:5. Do what we will, it cannot please be service to God, if we do not make him our end; no more than a servant's working to himself is service to his master. God will never be the rewarder of a work, whereof he is not the end; for if a man should build houses to all the country, if he build not one to me, I owe him nothing. Alas! to what purpose serves a generation of good works all killed by a depraved end?

Though it is a duty frequently to have a formal and express intention of the glory of God in our actions, yet to have it in every actions is impossible: neither are we bound to it; for then, for that very intention we should be obliged to have another, another for that, and another for that, in infinitum But we should always habitually and interpretatively design the glory of God. And that is done when, 1. The course of our lives is directed to the glory of God Psalms 1:1-6. ult.

2. When we walk according to the of God's word, taking heed that we swerve not in any thing from it.

3. When God's will is the reason as well as the rule of our actions; when we believe a truth, because God has said it; and do a duty, because God has commanded it.

If we do not so, God loses his glory, and we lose our labour.

Fourthly, The reason of the point is, because he is the first principle, therefore he must be the last end. He is first and the last, the Alpha, and therefore the Omega. God is the fountain of our being; and therefore seeing we are of him, we should be to him, Romans 11:1-36. ult. forecited. Man is a mere relative being; God is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Our being is but a borrowed being from him, as rays or beams of the sun are borrowed from the sun: therefore I AM is God's name. Whatever perfection we have is from him; hence he is called "the only wise, none good but one, that is God:" he gives us continuance of all these things, and it is on his cost that we live. As when the waters come from the sea unto the earth, and go back again unto it by brooks and rivers; so all we receive and enjoy comes from God, and ought to go back again to him, by being used for his glory. Wherefore to make ourselves our chief end, is to make ourselves a god to ourselves; for a creature to be a center to itself, and that God should be a means to that end, is to blaspheme, John 8:50

II. I shall speak to the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good.

Here I shall show, 1. The nature of this enjoyment.

2. The order of it.

3. That it is man’s chief end in point of happiness.

First, I shall shew the nature of this enjoyment. There is twofold enjoyment of God, imperfect and perfect.

First, There is an imperfect enjoyment of God in this life; which consist of two things.

1. In union with him, or special saving interest in him, whereby God is their God by covenant. By this union Christ and believers are so joined, that they are one in spirit, one mystical body. The whole man, soul and body, is united to him,and, through the mediator, unto God. This is the foundation of all saving enjoyment of God.

2. In communion with God, which is a participation of the benefits of that saving relation, whereof the soul makes returns to the Lord in the exercise of it’s graces, particularly of faith and love. This is had in the duties of religion, prayer, meditation, in which the Lord privileges his people with manifestations of his grace, favour, and love, bestows on them the influences of the holy Spirit, gives them many tokens of his kindness, and fills them with joy and peace in believing.

Secondly, There is a perfect enjoyment of God in heaven, when this world is no more. This consists in,

(1.) An intimate presence with him in glory Psalms 16:11, "In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." God himself shall be with then, and they shall ever be with the Lord, enjoying his glorious presence, brought near to his throne, and standing before him, where he shews his inconceivable glory.

(2.) In seeing him as he is, 1 John 3:2. They shall have a full, a satisfying, and never-ending sight of God, and of all his glorious perfections and excellencies, and they shall be ravished with the view thereof for ever.

(3.) In a perfect union with him, Revelation 21:3. He will be their God. They were united to God in Christ here by the Spirit and faith, and made partakers of a divine nature, but then only in part; but in heaven they shall perfectly partake of it. There shall be a most close and intimate union between God and them: God shall be in them, and they shall in God, in the way of a glorious and most perfect union, never to be dissolved.

(4.) In an immediate, full, free, and comfortable communion with him, infinitely superior to all communion they ever had with him in this world, and which no mortal can suitably describe.

(5.) Lastly, In full joy and satisfaction resulting from these things for ever, Matthew 25:21. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb, shall satisfy them with pleasures for evermore. They shall swim for ever in an ocean of joy, and every object they see shall fill them with the most ecstatic joy, which shall be ever fresh and new to them, through all ages of eternity.

SECONDLY, Let us consider the order of this enjoyment.

1. It is part of man’s chief end, and, in conjunction with glorifying of God, makes it up. And these two are put together, because no man can glorify God, but he that takes God for his chief good

and supreme happiness.

2. Glorifying of God is put before the enjoying of him, because the way of duty is the way to the enjoyment of God. Holiness on earth must necessarily go before felicity in heaven, Hebrews 12:14. There is an inseparable connection betwixt the two, as between the end and the means; so that no person who does not glorify God here, shall ever enjoy him hereafter. The connection is instituted by God himself, so that the one can never be attained without the other. Let no person, then, who has no regard for the glory and honour of God in this world, dream that he shall be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, in heavenly mansions. No; the pure in heart, and they who glorify God now, shall alone see God, to their infinite joy in heaven.

THIRDLY, I shall shew, that the enjoyment of God is man's chief end in point of happiness, the thing that he should chiefly seek. For this end,

1. Consider what man is. He is, (1.) A creature that desires happiness, and cannot but desire it. The desire of happiness is woven into his nature, and cannot be eradicated. It is as natural for him to desire it as it is to breathe. (2.) He is not self-sufficient: he is conscious to himself that he wants many things, and therefore he is ever seeking something without himself in order to be happy. (3.) Nothing but an infinite good can fully satisfy the desires of an immortal soul: because, whatever good he finds in the creature, he can still desire more, and will continue to desire it; and where it is not to be found, there his happiness is marred. So that man's happiness is neither to be found in himself nor in any creature, or created good.

2. Consider what God is.

1st. God is the chief good. Some persons, as angels and some things, as grace, glory, are good; but only God is the chief good, for he is the fountain good, and the water that is good is always best in the fountain. All other goodness is but second-hand goodness, derived and dependent; but God is original, underived, and independent goodness, the cause and source of whatever is good in heaven and earth. Now, where the more goodness is, there the more it is to be sought. And therefore, seeing God is the chief good, the enjoyment of him is the chief end which man should aim at in seeking.

2nd, God is all good. (1.) There is nothing in him but what is good; he is entirely without imperfection. (2.) All that is good is in him; so that the soul, finding him commensurate to its desires, needs nothing besides him; and therefore should not, and cannot, fully rest in any person or thing but God, who alone is able to satisfy all its desires, and afford it that happiness which it earnestly pants after.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. O how does reigning sin pervert the spirit of man, turning it quite away from its chief end! How many are there who make themselves their chief end! They are conjured within the circle of self, and out of it they can not move. Like beast they grovel on the ground, seeking themselves, and acting for themselves only or chiefly, pursuing the enjoyment of earthly things; but look not to God, Php 3:19. Their own advantage is the chief motive and aim they have in their natural, civil, and religious actions, either their own pleasure, profit, or honor and glory. And they never think of, never propose the glory and honor of the infinite majesty of heaven in anything they do.

2. This may fill the best with shame and blushing. O how much is God dishonored by our hearts, lips, and lives! O what self-seeking mixes itself with our best actions! How eagerly do we pursue created things, and how faintly the enjoyment of God! How absurd is such conduct! And how dishonorable to a holy God! It is a saying upon the matter, that God is not the chief good, that He is not a suitable portion for the soul, and that the creature is better than God. How should we be ashamed of ourselves on this account, and labor earnestly to make God the chief and ultimate end of all our actions, and the enjoyment of Him our chief happiness!

3. Behold the excellency of man above other creatures on earth! He is made for a noble end, to glorify and enjoy God, while other creatures were made for him. How sad it is, that men should thus forget their dignity, and turn slaves to those creatures which were made to serve them! And how deplorable and lamentable is it, that men, in place of making God their ultimate end, and placing their chief happiness in him, should make their belly, their lust and idols, their God, and place their chief felicity in the gratification of sensual and brutish pleasures; as the drunkard does in his bottle, the unclean person in his whore, the miser in his wealth, and the ambitious man in the titles of honor. Alas! Our hearts by nature are set on the earth that we tread upon, and our desires reach up to those things that we should make stepping-stones of. Let us earnestly implore divine grace to cure this disorder of our hearts, and give them a bias to more excellent things, and the enjoyment of that which will survive the grave, and not perish with the wrecks of time, and the dissolution of the world.

4. The soul of man is immortal, seeing to enjoy God forever is its ultimate and supreme happiness. God is immortal, and so must the soul be too, which can never be satisfied but in this never-dying being. The body too must rise again, seeing God is the God and portion of the whole man. Now, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Can that thinking and immaterial substance which eagerly desires happiness, and can find it no where but in the immortal God, perish with the body, and all its thoughts and desires be extinguished in the grave? No; its chief happiness will subsist forever, and so will the soul too. And both soul and body, which were united to God here, shall continue to be united to him forever, after the resurrection. Let us then seek to be united to God here, that we may be happy with and in him forever.

5. When God and the creature come in competition, we must renounce the creature, and cleave to God only, Luke 14:33. God is the chief good, and to glorify and adhere to him at all times, and in all cases, and amidst all trials, is our great duty, a duty absolutely required of us. If we are reduced to the dilemma, that we must either give up with the creature, or any worldly goods or possessions, or even life itself, or give up with and deny God and his cause, we must give up with and abandon the former, and not prefer them to the glory of God, which we ought always to study as our main end, and account our chief happiness and joy.

6. Here is a rule to try doctrines by, and also practices. Whatever doctrine tends to glorify God, and promote his honour in the world, is certainly from God, and is to be embraced. And whatever practices have that same tendency, they are good, and deserve to be imitated. Whereas any doctrine that tends to dishonour God, to rob him of his glory, and set the crown upon the creature’s head, to depreciate the free grace of God, exalt the power of nature and of free-will, in opposition to the efficacious and irresistible grace of God, as the doctrines of Pelagians, papists, Arminians, and others do, is not from God. Neither is any doctrine or opinion that robs the Son of God of his

essential dignity, supremacy, independency, and equality with the Father, to be received, because it is not of God, who will have all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Lastly, Let this then be your main and chief work, to glorify God, and to seek to enjoy him. And hence see the absolute need of Christ, and faith in him; for there is no glorifying of the Father without the Son, 1 John 2:23. and no enjoying of God, but through him. No sacrifice is or can be accepted, unless offered upon this altar; and there is no coming into the chamber of presence, but as introduced by Christ.

Author

Born into relative obscurity in 1676 in Duns, Berwickshire, Thomas Boston died in 1732 in the small parish of Ettrick in the Scottish Borders. But his 56 years of life, 45 of them spent in conscious Christian discipleship, lend credibility to the spiritual principle that it is not where a Christian serves, but what quality of service he renders, that really counts.

It is as a loving, faithful, rigorously self-disciplined Christian pastor, and one deeply committed to the grace of God, that Boston is best remembered. Leaving his first charge at Simprin (where he served 1699-1707), he settled in Ettrick for a 25-year ministry that saw the number of communicants rise from 60 (in 1710) to 777 (in 1731). Constantly taught them in season and out of season, in pulpit and in home.

S. Of The Covenant Of Works

Of The Covenant Of Works

Genesis 2:16-17. 'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'

Having already shown, that God from all eternity decreed whatever comes to pass; that he executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence; that he made all things of nothing by the word of his power; that he made man upright, adorned with his moral image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and that his providence, extends to all his creatures, and all their actions: that which now falls to be considered is the special act of providence which God exercised towards man, in the estate wherein he was created, namely, the covenant of works which God made with Adam. This covenant is sometimes called the covenant of works, because works, or obedience, was the condition of it; and sometimes the covenant of life, because life was promised therein as the reward of obedience. In discoursing from the subject, I shall I. Shew that God made a covenant with Adam, when he created him in a state of innocency.

II. Explain the nature of this covenant.

III. Shew why God entered into this covenant with man.

IV. Make improvement.

I. Here is the duty which God requires of man, not eating of the forbidden fruit; which was no command of the natural law, but superadded thereto, and implied his obligation to observe that law much more.

2. A threatening in case man should break this positive law, Thou shalt die.

3. A promise of life in case of continued obedience. For the threatening manifestly implies another proposition, vix. 'If thou eat not of this tree thou shalt live.' Besides, the license the Lord gives him to eat of every other tree in the garden, and so of the tree of life, imports this promise.

4. Man's accepting of the terms. This is left to be gathered from the proposal of it by the Lord to innocent man, who would refuse no terms that a bountiful God proposed. He objected not against the condition; he betook himself to the privilege of the covenant, eating of the other trees of the garden. Eve owns it, Genesis 3:3. 'Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' And when they had eaten of this forbidden fruit, their consciences terrified them, Genesis 3:8. 'Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.' No wonder that Moses with a running pen describes this transaction, which, as to its being the way of salvation then proposed, passed as a flying shadow. Thus this covenant appears from the text. To confirm this, consider that the scripture speaks of two covenants, Galatians 4:24. the one of grace, and

therefore the other of works. See also Hosea 6:7. 'They like men have transgressed the covenant.' The Hebrew bears, as Adam. It is the same word that occurs, Job 31:33. 'If I have covered my transgressions as Adam. This will further appear while we shew, II. The nature of this covenant. Wherein consider,

First, The parties covenanting. On the one hand was God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, man Creator and Sovereign Lord, who is the great Lawgiver, and withal good, and communicative of his goodness to his creatures. On the other part was man, God's creature; Adam, representing all mankind, and covenanting with God, not only for himself, but for all his posterity, as the natural father of all, of whose one blood nations of men were to be made, Acts 17:26. and the appointed federal head; which is clear from the imputation of his sin to all, Genesis 2:17.' 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' compare Romans 5:12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' There was no mediator in this covenant; nor was there need of any: for man was as yet the holy friend of God, and his service while he stood was acceptable to God, as being fully conformable to his own law, in which he could not but delight, as in his own image.

Secondly, The condition of that covenant was perfect obedience, which God required of Adam, Galatians 3:10, Galatians 3:12, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. -And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doth them shall live in them.' The tenor of this covenant was, 'Do this and live.' Where three things are to be considered.

1. The law, which was to be the rule of that obedience; which is twofold. (1.) The moral law, or the law of the ten commandments, as the apostle explains it, Galatians 3:10. forecited. It is true, Adam had not this law written on tables of stone, but it was written in his heart; the knowledge of it was concreated with him, so that he naturally knew it, being made upright; which he could not be without this, Ecclesiastes 7:29. Yea, this law is in part written on man's heart after the fall, as appears from Romans 2:15. Much more was it written on Adam's heart before the fall. This law is the perpetual rule of righteousness. (2.) There was the positive symbolical law, of not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This law was revealed to Adam in the text, neither could he otherwise have known it; it being no part of the law of nature, but a thing in itself altogether indifferent, and depending merely on the will of God, who could have appointed otherwise. Only, as the natural or moral law obliged him to this, seeing it commands the creature to obey God's will in all things; so by this his respect to the moral law was manifested; for as in not eating he testified his supreme love and obedience to God, so in eating of it he rejected the sweet yoke of God, and took on that of the devil.` 2. The nature of the obedience that was in the condition of this covenant. It behoved to be perfect.

(1.) In respect of the principle of it. So the law requires men to 'love the Lord with all the heart.'. It required not only external obedience, refraining from the thing forbidden; but internal obedience, which behoved to proceed from a disposition of soul bent towards God, in which there was no blemish, and altogether free and unconstrained without any reluctancy from within. And this implies, that the glory of God behoved to be man's chief end in all his actions, without having the least squint look to any other as his chief end.

(2.) Perfect in parts extending to all the commands of God whatsoever that were given him, Galatians 3:10. with respect to his thoughts, words, and actions. He was to do nothing that God prohibited, and to omit nothing that he commanded. He was to fulfill all righteousness, and his obedience was to be as broad as the law. Every commandment, without the least exception as to one tittle, was to be obeyed to the fullest extent.

(3.) Perfect in degrees. He was to 'love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind,' Matthew 22:37. Every act of obedience behoved to be perfect in degrees, wanting nothing of that perfection which the law required. Every action performed by him behoved to be screwed up to the pitch determined in the law, without falling short of it in the least punctilio. All that was lower than that height required, was to be rejected as sinful; and the least flaw spoiled the whole.

(4.) Perfect in duration or continuance, without interruption, while God should have kept him in the state of trial, Galatians 3:10. This state could not have been for ever, without rendering the promise of life fruitless; for to make a promise necessarily implies that a time is set for obtaining the reward promised to the obedience; and if Adam was to continue in a perpetual state of trial, he could never have obtained the reward of his obedience. The time of this probation is not mentioned in the Bible. Probably it was not to be very long. And perhaps the devil, knowing the benignity and goodness of the Creator to his upright creature man, that he would not keep him long in a state liable to mutability, was incited to attack him so very early as on the day of his creation, in order to prevent his confirmation in an upright estate. This and no less was the condition of that covenant. On no other terms could he attain to eternal happiness by it, or be justified in respect of his state before the Lord, though he might in respect of particular actions.

Hence it appears, that sincere obedience could not have been accepted, if it was not altogether perfect; nothing could be accepted, but an obedience altogether without fault or blemish; and that there was no place for repentance under this covenant; no sorrow for transgressing in the least instance could be admitted: for the threatening was peremptory, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' Such a positive denunciation cut off all hope, and rendered repentance of no avail.

3. Adam's power to perform the obedience required. He was able to answer all the demands of that covenant, being made upright, Ecclesiastes 7:29. and in the image of God. There was light in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections; there was such an harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Had he not then sufficient knowledge of his duty? and was he not invested with full power to perform the obedience required of him? Besides, it was not consistent with the justice and goodness of God to have required that of his creature, which he had not given him power to perform. The case is quite otherwise with respect to us in our lapsed state, for we have lost the power of yielding obedience to God's law in Adam. But let it be remembered, that though we are utterly unable to obey, yet God has not lost his right to demand obedience; which should induce us to betake ourselves to the second covenant, where every thing is freely given, and the will accepted for the deed.

Thirdly, The promise of the covenant was life, and therefore it is called the covenant of life. Now a threefold life was promised.

1. Natural life, consisting in the union of the soul with the body, which should have been continued without death, if Adam had not sinned, Genesis 3:19. Though man's body was made of dust, yet by virtue of the covenant-promise, it would have been secured from mingling with its original materials. As it was created without any principle of death, so it was not susceptive of any hazard from that quarter, as long as the covenant should be observed. His natural life would have remained in constant vigour, without languishing or decay: And he would have enjoyed the comfort of this life pure and unmixed without any of those evils, miseries and inconveniencies, which now overspread the world.

2. Spiritual life, consisting in the union of the soul with God. Man's soul was, and is in its own nature, immaterial and immortal, not liable to dissolution. It was endued with spiritual life at its creation, living in union and communion with God, and adorned with his image, consisting in righteousness and holiness. This image of God would have been continued in him. His knowledge of God and his duty would not have failed; nor would the righteousness of his will, or the purity and regularity of his affections have decayed. He would still have been the friend of God, and the favourite of heaven; and would never have been without the most lively marks of the love and friendship of his covenant God. He would have had ready access to God, without any eclipse of the divine favour; and the utmost pleasure and satisfaction in doing his duty, which would have been a continual feast to him.

3. Eternal life, or the glorious happiness of heaven. He should have been confirmed in his holy and happy estate beyond the hazard or possibility of sinning, or forfeiting it.--Though he was created mutable, and mutability is woven into the very nature of the creature, yet having finished the time allotted for his probation, he would have been secured from actual liableness to change for ever. His body would have been absolutely and for ever secured against hazard of death, or hurt from external accidents or injuries. He would have been confirmed in the love and favour of God for ever, without any hazard of falling out of it. The sun of favour from God would have shone upon him, without ever setting. and after the time of his trial was over, he would have been transported, soul and body, into the heavenly paradise, there to abide for ever. He would not have always lived in the earthly paradise, where he was to eat, drink, and sleep, but have been carried to the celestial paradise, where the happy inhabitants live as the angels of God. This is plain, if he consider that application of the covenant of works, Matthew 19:16-17.--' If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' Here Christ holds forth eternal life as the promise of this covenant, to be had on the performance of the condition. The weakness of the law to give eternal life now, ariseth only from the flesh, that is, the corruption of nature, whereby we are unable to fulfil the condition of it, Romans 8:3. It was eternal life that Christ purchased for his people, and that as he was made under the law, by which he obtained that very life to them, which otherwise they should have had, if man had not sinned, Romans 8:3-4.Galatians 4:4-5. Besides, eternal death was threatened; and the goodness of God uses not to propose greater punishments than rewards. And if it had not been so, man had nothing to expect more than he had when created, and set down in paradise.

Fourthly, The penalty of this covenant, in case of disobedience, was death; natural, consisting in the separation of the body from the soul; spiritual, in the separation of the soul from God, a death in trespasses and sin, Ephesians 2:1; and eternal, in the separation of both body and soul from God for ever in hell, Matthew 25:41. Man's body had never died had he not sinned, for 'the wages

of sin is death,' Romans 6:1-23: ult. and far less his soul, which would have flourished in all the beauty of spiritual verdure and vigour for ever. But it may be asked, How was the threatening accomplished, when Adam lived so long after his fatal transgression ? I answer, That day that he sinned he died spiritually. His soul was divested of the image of God that was stamped upon it at its creation; his understanding became dark, his will rebellious, and his affections impure and irregular. He lost the favour of his Maker, and he was exposed to the wrath of God, as a mark at which the arrows of the divine displeasure were to be levelled. That this spiritual death was inflicted upon man immediately after his foul transgression, is evident from those gripes and throws of conscience that seized him, which made him hide himself from God amidst the trees of the garden. And this of course would have actually terminated in eternal death in hell, had not a Mediator been provided, who found man bound with these cords of death as a malefactor bound to the execution. And as for his natural life, that day he sinned, he got his death's wounds, of which he afterwards died; that day he became mortal, and his body liable to sickness, disease, pain, and every other harbinger of death. The crown of immortality, which he held of his Creator, by virtue of the covenant made with him, fell from off his head, and he became a subject of the king of terrors. He became liable to all those cords wherewith death binds his prisoners. So that he was as sure a dead man as if dead already, though the execution of the sentence was delayed, because of his posterity which were in his loins, and because another covenant was prepared, by which the life and happiness forfeited by the breach of the first covenant, was to be recovered, and that with great advantage.

Fifthly, We may consider how the covenant of works was confirmed. It hath pleased God to append seals to his covenants with men; and this covenant seems not to have wanted some things intended sacramentally to confirm it, among which may be reckoned,

1. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:17. What sort of a tree it was, the scripture does not determine. But whatever it was, it was not so called, as having any virtue or power to make men wise; that was the devil's divinity, Genesis 3:5. who told Eve, that if they eat of it, they should be as gods; but he was a liar from the beginning, John 8:44. but it was called so, because by it they know to their fatal experience the happy state they fell from, and the woeful misery that fall plunged them into. It obtained that name, because it was a warning-sign to them to beware of the experimental knowledge of evil, as they knew good, They had special acquaintance with good in all its charming kinds; and this tree was set before them as a beacon to warn them from looking after the knowledge of evil, which, like a dangerous rock, would dash them to pieces, if they split upon it. And it served to confirm the covenant, and the happiness of their primitive state; inasmuch as in the threatening relative to this tree was included a promise, that as long as they kept from eating of its prohibited fruit, they should never die. And hence we may gather, which is no improbable opinion, that our first parents could fall by no other transgression than eating of this tree. And the devil that finished master of craft and subtility, attached them in this quarter, as the only side on which he could promise himself success. And alas for poor man ! Satan's stratagem succeeded, to the ruin of the whole human race.

2. The tree of life, Genesis 2:9. Though we have ground to think that this tree might be an excellent means of preserving the vigor of bodily life, as other trees in the garden also were, yet it could have no virtue in itself of making man every way immortal. But it seems to have been called the tree of life by reason of its signification being appointed of God as a sacrament, by eating

whereof he should have been confirmed in the belief of the promise of life natural being continued, of spiritual life perpetuated, and eternal life to be enjoyed in heaven; which was the main thing, and included the other two, Genesis 3:22. 'And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,' he must be driven out; denoting, that man, by sin, having lost his right to eternal life signified by this tree, was driven out, Revelation 2:7. that he might not profane the sacrament of it, to which he had now no more right. The words do not mean, that if Adam had eaten of the tree of life after his fall, he should retrieve his forfeited life; this being impossible, because the threatening was express, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; and that the tree of life had no such virtue and efficacy in itself, and ceased to be a sacrament of the covenant of works the moment man sinned. It was intended to assure and persuade him of life upon performing the condition; but the covenant being broken that assurance and persuasion actually fell of course. The whole verse may be read thus, Behold the man who was one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, that he may live for ever. Where three things are very plain. (2.) There is no irony or scoff here, as if God should say, Behold the mad has attempted to become like one of us, to know good and evil; but how shamefully has he failed of his design! but, on the contrary, a most pathetic lamentation over fallen man. This sentence is evidently broken off abruptly, the words, I will drive him out, being suppressed; even as in the case of a father, who with sighs and sobs, puts his offending child out of doors. (2.) It was God's design to prevent Adam's eating of the tree of life, as he had eaten of the forbidden tree; thereby mercifully taking care, that our fallen father, who had now got a revelation of the covenant of grace, might not, according to the corrupt natural inclination of men since the fall, run back to the covenant of works for life and salvation, by partaking of the tree of life, a sacrament of that covenant, and so reject the covenant of grace, by the eating of that tree now, as he had before broken the covenant of works, by the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (3.) At this time Adam imagined, that by the eating of the tree of life he might recover his forfeited life, and so live for ever.

III. I come now to shew why God entered into this covenant with man. I know no reason can be given for this, but what must be resolved into the glory of the grace and goodness of God. It was certainly an act of grace and admirable condescension in God, to enter into a covenant with his own creature. Man before that covenant was bound, but God was free: for man was under the law of nature before he was under the covenant; for the law was created with him, that is, he was no sooner a rational creature than he was under the law; but this covenant was not made with him till after he was brought into the garden to dress it. Before that covenant God was free to dispose of man as he saw fit, however perfectly he kept the law; but when in the covenant he made the promise of conferring life upon Adam in case of continued obedience, during the time set for his trial, then he was debtor to his own faithfulness, which is necessarily engaged to perform whatever he hath promised. Again, death was the natural wages of sin, though there had been no covenant, and that by the rule of justice, which plainly requires that man should be dealt with as he has done. But man having given consent, however tacit, and not expressed in so many words, which yet is equivalent to a formal consent to the covenant, implying the threatening, the Lord proceeds not by simple justice, but by express formal covenant, in punishing for the breach of it. But we may consider the reason of God the Almighty Creator and Lawgiver's entering into a covenant with man a little more particularly, and that to the end our hearts may be impressed with a just sense of the glorious perfections of the great God, and the great goodness shewn to man in that whole

transaction. I say, then, that God was pleased to deal with man by way of covenant, for two very important ends, the manifestation of his own glory, and man's greater good.

1. For his own glory, which is the supreme end of all his actions. More particularly.

(1.) To display the lustre of his manifold or variegated wisdom, Ephesians 3:10. This was of dealing was the most effectual method for securing man's obedience: for the covenant being a mutual engagement between God and his creature, as it gave him infallible assurance to strengthen his faith, so it was the sweetest bond to preserve his felicity. Divine wisdom shines clearly, in suiting the method of dealing to the nature of the reasonable creature, which was to be led with its own consent. it is true the precept alone is binding upon man by virtue of the authority of the imposer; but man's own consent increases the obligation, twisting the cords of the law and binding them more strongly to obedience. Thus Adam was God's servant by the condition of his nature, and also by his own choice, accepting the covenant, from which he could not recede, without the guilt and infamy of the worst perfidy. The terms of the covenant were such as became the parties concerned, God and man: it established an inseparable connection between duty and happiness; as is plain from the sanction, In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

(2.) To shew his wonderful moderation. For though he be Sovereign Monarch of the world, and has absolute power over all creatures to dispose of them as he pleases; yet, in covenanting with man, he sweetly tempered his supremacy and sovereign power, seeking as it were to reign with man's consent. And when, by virtue of his sovereign authority and absolute right, he might have enjoined harder terms to man, and those too altogether just and righteous, he chose to use so much moderation, that he would require nothing of man, but that which man himself should judge, and behoved in reason to be a just and easy yoke; and which, in accepting the terms, he acknowledged to be such.

(3.) For the praise of the glory of his grace. It was free condescension on God's part to make such a promise to man's obedience. He might have required obedience from him by virtue of his sovereignty, as his Lord and Maker, without binding himself by any promise to reward his service. All that he was capable to do was but mere duty to his Creator; and when he had done all that was commanded him, it was no more than what he was bound to do as God's creature. It was simply impossible for man to merit any thing at God's hand. It must be owned, there was much grace in this transaction, in that God entered into terms of agreement with man, not his equal, but his own creature, and the work of his hands; and in promising him a reward for his service, which was due to God by the law of creation previous to that federal deed, and so great a reward, even eternal life, between which and the work there was no proportion.

(4.) For venting his boundless love in the communications of his goodness to man. For God did not create man or angels because he needed them, but that there might be proper objects for receiving the displays of his goodness. Nor did he enter into a covenant with man from any natural necessity, but on design of communicating his bounty to him, Deuteronomy 7:7-8. Ezekiel 16:8. Though the Lord might have exacted all that obedience and service from man, which possibly he could yield, and reduced him into his first nothing by annihilation at last, or at least not have bestowed everlasting happiness upon him, not bound himself by covenant whereby he might expect it; yet, to shew the greatness of his goodness and love, he chose a way to reward that service in a most bountiful manner, which otherwise was due to him.

(5.) For the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness in keeping covenant with his creature, which could not otherwise have been so gloriously discovered. God had made illustrious displays of his wisdom, power, and goodness, in the creation of all things, and in that excellent piece of workmanship, man, the chief of his works in this world; but his faithfulness and veracity could not have been known, at least in its effects, without some such transaction.

(6.) That he might be the more cleared and justified in resenting the injuries done him by the disobedience of his creature, with whom he had condescended to deal so graciously. For the more condescension and goodness there is on God's part, the greater ingratitude appears on man's part in trampling on the divine goodness. But, 2. God condescended to enter into covenant with man for man's greater good.

(1.) That thereby he might put the higher honour upon him. It was indeed a very distinguishing respect put upon man to be an ally of heaven, and the confederate friend of God. If it be an honour for a mean country peasant to be joined in a formal bond of friendship with a prince or potentate on earth, how much greater honour and dignity was it unto man to be joined in a bond of love and friendship with God, the Supreme Monarch of the whole world?

(2.) To bind him the faster to his duty. The Lord knew man's mutable state, and how slippery and inconstant the heart of man is, where confirming grace is not vouchsafed; therefore, to prevent this inconstancy incident to man, a finite creature, and to establish him in his obedience, he laid him under a covenant-obligation to his service. Man was bound to obey God by virtue of his creation; but his making a covenant with man which he willingly consented to, was a superadded tie to bind him the faster to his duty. By the covenant that was made with Adam, he had a kind of help to make him the more careful to observe the law which was written on his heart, and a prop to make him stand the more fixed and steady. For, on the one hand, he was warned of his danger in case of disobedience, that so he might beware of offending God; and, on the other he was encouraged to serve his Maker with the greater alacrity, from the greatness of the reward set before him, and the greatness of the punishment threatened in case he should disobey: both which tended notably to incline him to constancy in his duty.

(3.) That his obedience might be more cheerful, being that unto which he had willingly tied himself. God chose to rule man by his own consent, rather than by force. An absolute law might have extorted obedience from man, but a covenant made it appear more free and willing. It made man's obedience look as if it were the result of his own choice, rather than of any obligation lying upon him. This tended much to the honour of God; for one volunteer that goeth to the war, doth honour the service more than ten soldiers pressed by force.

(4.) For his greater comfort and encouragement. By this he might clearly see what he might expect from God as a reward of his diligence and activity in his service.

(5.) That he might manifest himself to him, and deal with him the more familiarly. The dealing by was of covenant is the way of dealing betwixt man and man that hath least of distance in it, and most of familiarity, wherein parties come near to each other with greatest freedom. There is more nearness and familiarity in this than in any other way whereby God hath expressed his will. It is a more familiar way than that of commands and precepts, which imports nothing but authority and sovereignty. Yea, it is more familiar than the way of absolute promises, which might indeed set

forth God’s abundant goodness, but not so much God’s familiar condescension, as the way of a covenant, when so great and so glorious a Majesty stoops to treat and deal by reciprocal engagements with so mean a creature as man, who is sprung of dust.

I come now to make some practical improvement of this subject.

1. See here the great and wonderful condescension of God, who was pleased to stoop so low as to enter into a covenant with his own creature. Though he is infinitely great and glorious in himself, the fountain of his own blessedness, the glass of his own beauty, and the throne of his own glory; yet he condescended to treat with mean man in a way of covenant. How astonishing is it that God should make a covenant with dust and ashes; and that he should bind himself to man, to give him life and happiness as the reward of his obedience, which he owed to God by the law of his creation?

2. See what a glorious condition man was in when God entered into a covenant with him. He was placed in a pleasant and delightful place, where he was furnished with every conveniency he could desire. He was conformed to God in holiness. Light sparkled in his understanding, sanctity shined in his will, and his affections were regular and pure. He had familiar intimacy and communion with his Maker, and conversed as freely with him as a favourite with his prince. As he enjoyed the light of the sun in paradise to cherish and refresh his body, so he had the light of God’s countenance to solace and delight his soul. Thus happy was man: but, ah! he is now fallen like a star from heaven.

3. See that God is very just in all that comes on man. He set him up with a good stock, in a noble case, making him his covenant-party. He gave him the noblest undeserved encouragement to continue in his obedience, and told him his hazard if he should disobey. So that falling he is left without excuse, his misery being entirely owing to himself.

4. See the deplorable condition of all Adam’s posterity by reason of the breach of this covenant. They are under the curse of the law, which is an universal curse, and discharges its thunder against every person who is naturally under that covenant, and has not changed his state.

5. This serves to humble all flesh, and beat down the pride of all created glory, under the serious consideration of the great loss we have sustained by Adam’s fall, and the sad effects thereof upon us. We have lost all that is good and valuable, the image and favour of God, and have incurred the wrath and displeasure of a holy God.

6. See the unsearchable riches of divine grace, in providing a better covenant for the recovery and salvation of fallen man. The duty of the first covenant is now impossible, and the penalty of it intolerable. It admits of no repentance, nor accepts of any short endeavours; but leaves sinful man as a malefactor in the hands of the law. Blessed be God for the revelation of the covenant of grace, wherein life and salvation is freely provided and offered to fallen man through the obedience and satisfaction of the second Adam. Well may it be called a covenant of grace: for it came from the rich and free grace of God, as its true spring; it is all bespangled with gracious promises, as the heavens are with stars; and all the blessings contained in it are gratuitous and free, such as men cannot plead any right or title unto by any merit or works of their own. When the angels sinned, God expelled them from heaven, and left them to perish in their misery; but he was graciously pleased to enter into a covenant with his Son, as second Adam, for the recovery of fallen man, who by his obedience and death hath fulfilled the law, and suffered the penalty thereof,

and thereby made ample provision for all the wants and miseries of poor sinners.

7. There is no wonder, that however little good is wrought in the world, yet working to win heaven is so frequent. We have sufficient evidence of the covenant of works being made with man as a public person, seeing it is yet natural to us to do that we may live, and to think that God will accept us for our works' sake.

8. See your misery, all ye that are out of Christ. This covenant is your way to heaven, which is now impossible. Tell not of your good meanings and desires, your repentance, and your obedience, such as it is; and think not to get life, salvation, and acceptance thereby. For the covenant ye are under admits of not repentance, no will for the deed. It requires nothing less than perfect obedience, which ye are incapable to give.

9. Lastly, Therefore give over this way of seeking life by the broken covenant of works, and come to the Lord Jesus Christ; lay hold on the better covenant, and come up to Christ's chariot, Song of Solomon 3:9-10. which will drive you safely to eternal life and glory. That chariot which the first Adam drove, went not far till it was all shattered, and made unfit to carry any to heaven. It reaks with the weight of the least sin; and so ye can never think it will drive to heaven with you, Romans 8:1-39. But come into the chariot of the covenant of grace, and ye will be safely carried in it to the land of eternal rest and glory.

S. Of The Holy Trinity

OF THE HOLY TRINITY by Thomas Boston

1676-1732 For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

1 John 5:7 In 1 John 5:5, John lays down a fundamental article of the Christian faith, that Jesus is the Son of God; and brings in the witnesses of this truth, 1 John 5:7-8. The text condescends on the divine heavenly witness. Where, consider, 1. Their number, three, viz. three persons.

2. Their names, the Father, the Word, that is, the Son so called, because he reveals the Father's mind, and the Holy Ghost. And here is noted the order of their subsisting also.

3. The majesty and glory of these witnesses; they are in heaven, manifesting their glory there, and from it have borne record; which should make the inhabitants of the world to believe their testimony.

4. Their act: They bear record to this truth.

5. Their unity: They are one, one God; not only one in consent and agreement, but one thing, one substance, one essence. The doctrine evidently arising from the words is,

Doctrine.

"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." In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall, 1. Explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, the Godhead, and a person.

2. Shew that there are three persons in the Godhead.

3. Prove that these three are distinct persons.

4. Demonstrate that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

5. Evince the weight and importance of this article of the Christian faith.

6. Lastly, Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, the Godhead,and a person.

1. By the Godhead is meant the nature or essence of God, Acts 17:29, even as by manhood is understood the nature of man. Now the Godhead is but one, there being but one God.

2. A divine person, or a person in the Godhead, is the Godhead distinguished by personal properties, Hebrews 1:3, where Christ the Son of God is called "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." For consider the Godhead as the fountain or principle of the Deity,

so it is the first person; consider it as begotten of the Father, it is the second; and as proceeding from the Father and the Son, it is the third person.

II. Our next business is to shew that there are three persons in the Godhead. This is confirmed by the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament.

1. The Old Testament plainly holds forth a plurality of persons in the Godhead, Genesis 1:26. "God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." Genesis 3:22. "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." This cannot be understood of angels: for man is said to be created after the image of God, but never after the image of angels; and the temptation was, "Ye shall be as gods," not as angels. Nor must it be conceived, that God speaks so after the manner of kings; for that way of speaking is used rather to note modesty than royalty. But when God speaks so as to discover most of his royalty, he speaks in the singular number, as in the giving of the law, "I am the Lord thy God." This trinity of persons is also not obscurely mentioned in Psalms 33:6. "By the Word of the Lord, or JEHOVAH, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth." Here is mention made of Jehovah the Word and the Spirit, as jointly acting in the work of creation. Accordingly we find, that `all things were made by the Word,' John 1:3. and that "the Spirit garnished the heavens," Job 26:13. Nay, a Trinity of persons is mentioned, Isaiah 63:1-19. where. besides that the Lord, or Jehovah, is three times spoken of, Isaiah 63:7. we read, of "the angel of his presence," which denotes two persons, and "his Spirit," Isaiah 63:9-10. So that it evidently appears, that the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament most plainly teaches this doctrine.

(1.) I begin with the text, where it is expressly asserted, There are three that bear record, &c. Here are three witnesses, and therefore three persons. Not three names of one person: for if a person have ever so many names, he is still but one witness. Not three Gods, but one. (2.) In the baptism of Christ, Matthew 3:16-17. mention is made of the Father speaking in an audible voice, the Son in the human nature baptized by John, and the holy Ghost appearing in the shape of a dove; plainly importing three divine persons. (3.) This appears from our baptism, Matthew 28:8, Matthew 28:19. "Go ye and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Observe the words, in the name, not names; which denotes, that these three are one God: and yet they are three distinct persons. (4.) It appears from the apostolical benediction, where all blessings are sought from the three persons distinctly mentioned, 2 Corinthians 13:14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

III. That these three are distinct persons, (for though they cannot be divided, yet they are distinguished), is evident. For the Son is distinct from the Father, "being the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:2. ; and in John 8:17-18. He reckons his Father one witness and himself another. And that the Holy Ghost is distinct from both, appears from John 14:16-17. "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth." And the text is plain for the distinction of all three. Now, they are distinguished by they order of subsisting, and their incommunicable personal properties. In respect of the order of subsistence, the Father is the first person, as the fountain of the Deity, having the foundation of personal subsistence in himself; the Son is the second person, and the Holy Ghost is the third

person, as having the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son. And so for their personal properties,

1. It is the personal property of the Father to begat the Son, Hebrews 1:5-6, Hebrews 1:8. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." This cannot be ascribed either to the Son or Holy Ghost.

2. It is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father , John 1:14, John 1:18. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. no man hath seen God at any time : the only-begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father , he hath declared him."

3. The property of the Holy Ghost is to proceed from the Father and the Son, John 15:26. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." In Galatians 4:6. He is called "the Spirit of the Son ;" and in Romans 8:9 " The Spirit of Christ." He is said to "receive all things from Christ," John 16:14-15.; To be "sent by Him," John 15:26.: And to be "sent by the Father in Christ's name'" John 14:26. All this plainly implies, that the Holy Spirit proceedeth both from the Father and the Son. this generation of the Son and Holy Ghost was from all eternity. For as God is from everlasting to everlasting, so must this generation and procession be: and to deny it, would be to deny the supreme and eternal Godhead of all the three glorious persons.

IV. I proceed to shew, that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. To this end consider,

1. How express the text is, These three are one. When the apostle speaks of the unity of the earthly witnesses, ver. 8. he says, they "agree in one," acting in unity of consent or agreement only. But the heavenly witnesses are one, viz. in nature or essence. They are not only of a like nature or substance, but one and the same substance; and if so, they are and must be equal in all essential perfections, as power and glory.

2. There is but one God, as was before proved, and there can be but one God. Now, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them the true God; and therefore they are one God, the same in substance; equal in power and glory. And this I shall prove by scripture testimony.

First, That the Father is true God, none that acknowledge a God do deny. Divine worship and attributes are ascribed to him. But, Secondly, That the Son is true God, appears if ye consider, (1.) The scriptures expressly calls him God, Romans 9:5. John 1:1. Acts 20:28. "the true God" 1 John 5:20. "the great God" Titus 2:13. "the mighty God" Isaiah 9:6. "Jehovah or Lord" Malachi 3:1. which is a name proper to the true God only, Psalms 83:1-18 (2.) The attributes of God, which are one and the same with God himself, are ascribed to him; as eternity, Micah 5:2. "Whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting; independence and omnipotence, Revelation 1:8. "The almighty;" omnipresence, John 3:13. where he is said to be "in heaven," when bodily on earth; and Matthew 28:20. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world," omniscience, John 21:17. "Lord thou knowest all things," says Peter to him; and unchangeableness, Hebrews 1:11-12. "They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and

as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." (3.) The works proper and peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, John 1:3. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Conservation of all things, Hebrews 1:3. "upholding all things by the word of his power." Raising the dead by his own power and at his own pleasure, John 5:21, John 5:26. "The Son quickeneth whom he will." The Father "hath given to the Son to have life in himself." The saving of sinners, Hosea 1:7. "I will save them by the Lord their God." Compare John 13:4. "in me is thine help." Yea, whatsoever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise. (4.) Divine worship is due him, and therefore he is the true God, Matthew 4:10. The angels are commanded to "worship him," Hebrews 1:8. All must give the same honour to him as to the father, John 5:23. We must have faith in him, and they are blessed that believe in him, Psalms 2:12. compare Jeremiah 17:5. We are to pray to him, Acts 7:58. and we are baptised in his name, Matthew 28:19. Nay, he is expressly said to be "equal with the Father," Php 2:6. and "one with him."John 10:30. Now, seeing God will "not give his glory to another," Isaiah 48:11. because he is true and cannot lie, and he is just, it follows, that though Christ be a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from his Father, but one God with him, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And it is no contradiction to this doctrine when Christ says, "My Father is greater than I," John 14:28. for he is not speaking there of his nature as God, but of his mediatory office; and hence he is called the Father's "servant," Isaiah 42:1. Thirdly, That the Holy Ghost is true God, or a divine person, appears, if ye consider, (1.) The scripture expressly calls him God, Acts 5:3, 4, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Isaiah 6:9. Compare with Acts 28:25-26, 2 Samuel 23:2, 3. He is called "Jehovah, or the Lord," Numbers 12:6. compare 2 Peter 1:21. (2.) Divine attributes are ascribed to him; as omnipotence, he "worketh all in all," 1 Corinthians 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:9-11, omnipresence, Psalms 139:7. and omniscience, 1 Corinthians 2:10. (3.) Works peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, Psalms 33:6. conservation, Psalms 104:30. working miracles, Matthew 12:28. raising the dead, Romans 8:11. inspiring the prophets, 2 Timothy 3:16. compare 2 Peter 1:21. (4.) Divine worship is due to him. We are baptised in his name, Matthew 28:19, we are to pray to him, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Acts 4:23, Acts 4:25. Compare 2 Samuel 23:2-3. [1] That the Godhead is not divided, but that each of the three divine persons hath the one whole Godhead, or divine nature. [2] That it is sinful to imagine any inequality amongst the three persons, or to think one of them more honourable than another, seeing they are all one God.

V. I proceed to consider the weight and importance of this article.

It is a fundamental article, the belief whereof is necessary to salvation. For those that are,"without God," Ephesians 2:12. and"have not the Father," cannot be saved; but :whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father," 1 John 2:23. Those that are none of Christ's cannot be saved; but "he that hath not the Spirit, is none of his," Romans 8:9. None receive the Spirit but those that know him. John 14:17. This mystery of the Trinity is so interwoven with the whole of religion, that their can neither be any true faith, right worship, or obedience without it. For take away this doctrine, and the object of faith, worship, and obedience is changed; seeing the object of these declared in the scripture, is the three persons in the Godhead; and the scriptures know no other God. Where is faith, if this be taken away? John 17:3. "This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." Here it is to observed, that our Lord does not call the Father only the true God, exclusive of the other persons of the Trinity; but

that he (including the other persons who all subsist in the same one undivided essence) is the only true God, in opposition to idols, falsely called gods. 1 John 2:23. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." There is no more true worship or fellowship with God in it : "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father," Ephesians 2:18. And there is no more obedience without it, John 15:23. "He that hath me," says Christ, "hath my Father also." John 5:23, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him."

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. How much ought we to prize divine revelation, wherein we have a discovery of this incomprehensible mystery! This is a truth which nature’s light could never have found out. It is above reason, though not contrary to it; for reason, though it could never have brought it to light, yet when it is discovered, it must needs yield to it; for as the judgement of sense must be corrected by reason, so judgement of reason by faith.

2. See here that God whom you are to take for your God, to love, trust in, worship and obey, even the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is that God who offers himself to you in the gospel, and whom you are to take for your God in Christ. This is that Father who elected a select company of sinners unto salvation; this is that Son that redeemed them unto God by his blood; and this is that Spirit that renews and sanctifies them, making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

3. Lastly, Take this Father for your Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and be obedient children, if ye would be reckoned of his seed. Receive the Son, and slight him not. Give your consent to the gospel-offer, seeing it is your Maker that offers to be your husband. And grieve not the Holy Spirit, lest ye be found fighters against God.

S. Of the Creation of Man

OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

Genesis 1:27.--So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.

HAVING discoursed of the creation of all things out of nothing, and exhibited some of the displays of the admirable wisdom, power, and goodness of God apparent therein, i come now to speak of the creation of man, the masterpiece of the lower creation. In the text we have an answer to that question, " How did God create man ?" God only apake the word and then the other creatures were produced: but being to create man, he called a council of the Trinity for that end: whereby the excellency of man above the other creaw tnres, who is a compend of the world, is clearly demonstrated. Here we have the execution of that council, So God created man, &c. For, as says Seneca, a heathen moralist, man. is not a work huddled over in a haste, and done without great forethought and consideration; for man is the greatest and most stupendous work of God, even of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As the sacred historian had said before of the Creator, ’ Let us make man in our image,’ &c. so it is not for nought that be repeats the act of creating three times in this verse; in which also the us in the former verse is restrained to God; so that the plurality there spoken of is not God and angels, but the three persons, one God; for it was not angels, but God that created man. Man here signifies man and woman, male and female, Adam and Eve. Wherefore they are called him and them; for as they were originally one, God having made two of one by creation; so they two were made one again by marriage. And they were both made in one day, Genesis 1:26-31. ; and that in the image of God, which is twice repeated;, the import whereof seems to be, that man was made very like God. Whereas there is but a shadow and vestige of him in the inferior creatures, as we may read the name and perfections of God in the least herb of the field; man was made so to represent God in his moral perfections as to imitate his virtues. Two things are here to be considered, I. God’s making man male and female.

II. His making man after his image.

I. Let us consider God’s making man, male and female; that is, man and woman.

First, Adam was the male, and Eve the female. These were the common parents of all mankind, and there was do man in the world, before Adam. He is expressly called ’ the first man,’ 1 Corinthians 15:5. and Eve "the mother of all living," Genesis 3:20. And hence it is said " God hath made of one blood all nations of men," Acts 17:26.

Secondly, Man consists of a soul and body, which being united constitute man; that is, man or woman. Here I shall consider, 1. The body; and, 2. The soul.

1. The body of the man. Man’s body is a piece of most rare and curious workmanship, plainly indicating its divine Maker. In it there is a variety of members, none of them superfluous, but all adapted to the use assigned them by the wise Creator. The man’s body, as Moses tells us, was

formed of the dust of the ground, Genesis 2:7. Hence he was called Adams, which signifies red earth.; of which sort of virgin-earth man's body seems to have been made. The word rendered dust, signifies not dust simply, (says Zanchius), but clay, which is earth and water. This may teach us humility, and repress our pride, and particularly glorying in beauty or any external advantages of person, seeing we are sprung of no higher original than the earth upon which we tread; especially seeing, as we derived our first being from it, we must return to it again, there to abide till the resurrection-day.

2. The woman's body was formed of the man's, Genesis 2:21-22. of a rib of the man's side, but not a bare rib, but flesh on it, Genesis 2:23. which was taken out of his side while he was in a deep sleep, into which God cast him; so that he felt no pain. And it is not improbable, that in that deep sleep God revealed to him what he himself afterwards declares concerning Eve, and marriage in general, Genesis 2:23-24. Whether Adam had more ribs than, other men, is not determined. If he had, it was not superfluous to him as the origin of mankind, though it might be as a private person; and therefore Eve being made of it, there was no more use for it. If he had not more ribs than other men, yet he sustained no loss thereby, which was otherwise made up, Genesis 2:21. either by a new rib, or hardening the flesh to the use of a rib. In this the wisd6m of God doth illustriously appear.

(1.) The woman's body was made of nobler matter than the man's, to be some ballast to the man's excellency in .respect of, his sex, that he might not despise but honour her. The word rendered made, Genesis 2:22. is in the Hebrew built. He made the man, but he built the woman, as a stately palace, or house, where all mankind draw their first breath.

(2.) It was made of the man's body, to teach men to love their wives as their own flesh.

(3.) It was not made out of man's head, to shew her that she is not to be her husband's mistress, nor usurp authority over him, 1 Timothy 2:12. ; nor out of his feet, to shew him that she is not to be his slave, to be trampled on by him; but out of his side, near his heart, to shew him that she must be treated as his companion, loved, nourished, and cherished by him.

(4.) Lastly, The mystery of the church drawing her life out of Christ's sleeping the sleep of death on the cross, Eph. v. seems to have been here intended and shadowed forth. The bodies of both our first parents were far more beautiful, handsome, and graceful than our bodies are now. 'tee are begot of men, but they were the immediate workmanship of God. The author being more excellent, the workmanship must be so too. And, so Adam signifies to be ruddy, and to shine, Lamentations 4:7. So that to Eve in particular may justly be applied the following lines of a celebrated poet A woman loveliest of the lovely kind, In body perfect, and complete in mind. Secondly, The soul of man was of an original far different from that of his body. Moses gives us this account of it, Genesis 2:7. 'The Lord God-breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' The Lord inspired him with a living reasonable soul, which presently appeared by his breathing at his nostrils; whereas before he was only a fair lifeless body. And this different account of man's soul and body clearly holds forth, that it was not fetched out of any power in the matter of his body, but was created of nothing. For this inspiration plainly implies that something was infused into it, which was not in it before, and did not originally inhere-in it. Thus was the soul both of the man and the woman created; for that both were created with rational souls, is taught in our text, where they are said to be made after God's image; and Moses leaves us to gather the manner of

the creation of the woman’s soul from that of Adam’s. Concerning the soul of man, three things are specially to be known.

1. That it is an incorporeal or spiritual substance, different from the body. It is called a spirit, Zechariah 3:1. And Stephen prays, Acts 7:59. " Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit. Compare Luke 24:39. where our Lord says concerning his body after’his resurrection from the dead, `Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see. me have."

2. As the souls of Adam and Eve were immediately created of God, so the souls of all their posterity are immediately formed by God, and proceed not from their parents by generation or any other way: but God infuseth the soul created by him of nothing, into the body formed in the womb when it is fitly organised to receive it. And yet a man may properly be said to beget a man, though he only begets the body, as well as to kill a man, though he can only kill the body. This is plain from that express scripture-testimony, Zechariah 12:1.--" that formeth the spirit of man within him." So, Hebrews 12:9. God is held forth as " The Father of spirits," in opposition to men as " the fathers of our flesh;", which must needs be by immediate creation for otherwise he is the Father of our flesh too, Ecclesiastes 12:7. " Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." He gave the body too, but the soul in such a manner as he gave not the body.

3. Hence the soul is immortal, being a spirit, and dies not with the body, Ecclesiastes 12:7. just cited. Being immaterial, not consisting of parts, it cannot be dissolved. Men can kill the body, but not the soul; and therefore it doth not die with the body, being invulnerable, and unsusceptive of external injuries, Matthew 10:28. and Matthew 22:32. Neither does it sleep till the resurrection, as some have foolishly supposed. Our Lord told the thief on the cross, that that very day he (that is, his soul) should be with him in paradise, not to sleep, but to be actively employed in exercises peculiar to the heavenly state. And certain it is that the apostle Paul had no such thought, when he said, Php 1:23. " I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." If his soul was to sleep and doze in indolence and inactivity after his death, he had never preferred the dissolution of his body, and the advantage of being with Christ, to his continuing in his mortal state, in which he was most usefully employed.

Thirdly, Why did God make man male and female?

1. That man might have a meet help, Genesis 2:18. ; and this was the meetest help for the comfort of life, (however uncomfortable sin has now made it); otherwise God had given Adam a friend and not wife. Hence the endearments of conjugal society, when discreetly and properly ’entered into and cultivated, are found, even in our present imperfect state, far preferable to those arising from the strictest and closest friendships among men.

2. For the lawful propagation of mankind, Genesis 1:27-28. that there might be a godly seed, Malachi 2:15. and for a remedy against all inordinate lusts and libidinous desires.

II. Let us now consider God’s making man after his own image. Here I shall shew, 1. Who was created after God’s image; and 2. Wherein this image consisted.

First, I am to shew" who was created after the image of God. It was both the man land the woman, as is clear from the teat. In this respect, indeed, there was one thing wherein the man excelled the

woman, which is taken notice of by the apostle, 1 Corinthians 11:7. He is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.' Not but that the woman is the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as well as the man: but the man is the image of God in respect of that authority which he has over his wife, who is the glory of man in respect of her subjection to him. So that what we say, of the man as to his being created after the divine image, must be understood of the woman too.

Secondly, I will shew wherein the image of God, in which our first parents were made, consisted. Abstracting from the spirituality of their souls, and the erect and graceful posture of their bodies, peculiar to rational animals alone, which are but a faint shadow of the image of God, (if they can with any propriety be called a shadow of it at all), this image doth principally at least shine in the soul, and those glorious qualities wherewith man was endued, that is, both the man and the woman.

1. The image of God, after which man was created, consisted in knowledge, Colossians 1:10. He was created wise: Not that he knew all things, for that is proper to the omniscient Being alone; but he was ignorant of nothing that he was obliged to know; he had all the knowledge that was necessary for life and godliness. He had clear and distinct apprehensions of God, his nature and perfections, far superior to any knowledge of that kind that can now be acquired by the most diligent and the most laboured researches of human industry. And we can hardly suppose that 'he was ignorant of the great mystery of the Trinity, considered abstractly; as it was most certainly the second person who appeared to and conversed with him.. This knowledge or wisdom of man appeared in his knowledge of the miraculous formation of Eve, whose nature and duty, as well as his own towards her, be declares; which he could not know but by a prophetical spirit. The primitive pair had God's law written on their hearts, Romans 2:15. even that same law which was afterwards written on tables of stone, and promulgated from mount Sinai. It was concreated with them ; so that no sooner were they man and woman, than they were knowing and intelligent creatures, endued with all the ,knowledge necessary for their-upright state. Adam's giving names to the beasts, and those such as were expressive of their natures, Genesis 2:19. was a great evidence of his knowledge of nature. Thus his knowledge reached from the sun, that glorious fountain of light, to the meanest glow-worm that shines in the hedge. And that God gave them dominion over the earth and all the inferior creatures, is an evidence that they were endued with the knowledge of managing civil affairs, which a wise man will manage with discretion.

2. The image of God consisted in righteousness, Ephesians 4:24. There was a perfect conformity in his will to the will of God. He was endued with a disposition to every good thing, Ecclesiastes 7:29. God made man upright.' His will was straight with God's will, not bending to the right or left hand, without any irregular bias or inclination. And he had full power and ability to fulfil the whole law of God. As, in respect of knowledge, he perfectly knew the whole extent of his duty, so he was created with ,sufficient powers for the due performance thereof.

3. It consisted in holiness, Ephesians 4:24. Man's affections were pure and holy, without being tinctured with any vitious appetite. They were regular and orderly, free from all disorder and distemper. They were set on lawful objects, and that in a right manner, loving what God loved, and hating what he hated; loving and delighting in God with all his heart, strength, soul, and mind. Yet all this happy disposition was mutable, he was not confirmed therein, nor set beyond the reach of

falling therefrom, as the event has mournfully shewed. This is that image of God wherein man was created, consisting in original righteousness, where his reason was naturally subject to God, his will to his reason, and his affections to his will, and consequently all duly subordinated to God, and directed to him, without any propensity or inclination to evil. A signal of this was, that both our first patents were naked, and yet were not ashamed, nor susceptive of shame. That man was created in this condition, wise, altogether righteous, and holy, is not only clear from the above-cited scriptures, but is also agreeable to reason; which suggests, that nothing impure or imperfect, nothing having any vitious tendency or inclination, could proceed out of the hands of an holy God, who cannot be the author of evil. Man was created after the image of God; and in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, the scripture shows us, the image of God consists. Moreover, God made all very good, Genesis 1:31. Man's goodness consists in these excellent qualities; and without these he would not have. been fit for the end of his creation. How was it possible for him to have exercised the dominion he was invested with over the creatures, or served his Creator in the manner that became him without such endowments? Hence I infer,

(1.) That man was not created in pure naturals, that is, with bare faculties, neither good nor evil. For " God made man upright," Ecclesiastes 7:28.

(2.) That there was not naturally in man a combat betwixt the flesh and the spirit, betwixt reason and appetite; no inclination to sin, no lustings of the flesh, or the inferior faculties of the soul. For. this corrupt will or inclination is sin properly and truly, as the apostle shews, Romans 7:7. and the fountain of all sin. And to say, that these dispositions were in man at his original formation, makes God indeed the author of sin; seeing he made (as they falsely pretend) man of such matter as is necessarily accompanied with this corrupt will and depraved inclination. For says the apostle, I All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,' 1 John 2:16.

(3.) That original righteousness was natural to man, and not supernatural in the primitive state. Natural it was, in so far as it was concreated with him, and was necessary to the perfection of man as he came out of the creating hands of God; and was not added to be as a bridle to his natural inclinations to evil, whereof he had none.

(4.) That Adam had the same spiritual strength in innocency wherewith now the regenerate do believe in Christ; having a power to do whatsoever God should command, and to believe whatever he should reveal.

4. The image of God consisted consequently at least in dominion over the inferior creatures, whereby he had a right to dispose of them according to his pleasure, Genesis 1:26-27. ; which was a resemblance of the supreme dominion of God over the creatures, though not absolute and unlimited, but dependent on God. This was evidenced by the beasts being brought to Adam, in token of their subjection to him, and his, imposing names on them expressive of their natures and properties. The image of God seated in man's spiritual and immortal soul, endued with understanding, will, and affections, shone forth also in his body, which bad a wonderful beauty in it, and such an admirable contexture of parts, adapted to their several uses and ends, as skewed it was intended for an immortal duration. There was no blemish, defect, nor disease, to be found in him. He was not liable to any attack by gout or gravel, or any tormenting pain. All the humours of his body were in a just temperament and disposition, calculated to prevent any distemper which

might tend to the dissolution of that excellent, constitution. His senses were all quick and lively, able to perform with vigour and delight their several operations. He was immortal in this state; and not subject to the attacks of death. Though his body was composed of jarring elements, which had a natural tendency to dissolution, yet the soul was endued with such virtue as to embalm the body, and preserve it from the least degree of corruption. The tree of life was the sacramental pledge of man's immortality. The erect figure of his body looking towards heaven, and the majesty that is in his countenance, shewed man to be the chief of the works of God in this lower world. I shall shut up all with a few inferences.

1. Ah! how are we fallen from heaven! What a lamentable change has sin brought on man! It has defaced the moral image of God, with which man's soul was beautifully decorated in his primitive state, and rent in pieces that pleasant picture of himself which God set up in. this lower world. This stately fabric lies now in ruins, and calls us to lament over its ruins with weeping eyes and grieved hearts. 'Now there is ignorance in the mind, instead of that knowledge of God and divine things, with which it was richly furnished in its primitive state. The understanding, that as a lamp or, candle shone brightly, is now enveloped with darkness. The will, that was exactly conformable to the will of God, and naturally disposed to comply with every intimation thereof, is now filled with irregularity, enmity, and rebellion against God and his law. The affections that were all regular, holy, and pure, are now disordered and distempered, placed upon and eagerly bent towards improper and sinful objects, loving and doating upon what men should hate, hating what they should love, joying in what they ought to mourn for, glorying in what is shameful, abhorring the chief good, and desiring what is ruinous to them. All the members of the body that were subordinated to the upright mind, and entirely at its command, are now in rebellion, and mislead and enslave the mind and superior faculties. And the creatures that were man's humble servants, ready to execute his commands, are now risen up against him, and the least of them, having a commission, would prove more than a match for him. Nay, it is with difficulty and much pains that any of them are brought to engage in his service. Ah ! how dismal is man's case! The crown is fallen from our head: wo unto us that we have sinned. Let us weep and mourn over our ruined state, and never rest till we get it repaired by faith in the Lord Jesus, the great Repairer of this spiritual breach.

2. How lovely are knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, wherein the image of God consists! They shine with a dazzling brightness, and should charm and captivate our minds. But, alas! by nature we are blind, and see not their beauty and excellency. 0 ! let us endeavour, through grace, to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new man,~which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Try if this blessed change has passed upon you, if ye be now light in the Lord, be disposed to do his will, and are holy in heart and life. Study righteousness and holiness if ye would be like God. And beware of ignorance, unrighteousness, and impurity, which proceed from Satan, and make you so unlike a righteous and holy God.

3. Come to the Lord Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and the beginning of the creation of God, who at first made man after the divine image, and can make him so over again, and will do so to those that come to him by faithr with this addition, that the image of God which he will impress on the soul anew, shall never be lost any more. 0 come to him now, that ye may become God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

S. Of the Decrees of God

OF THE DECREES OF GOD. by Thomas Boston Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick, Scotland excerpted from his

Commentary on the Shorter Catechism Ephesians 1:11.—According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. THE apostle here gives an instance of the sovereign freedom of divine grace through Jesus Christ in the believing Jews. 1. There is here the high privilege they were advanced to, a right to the heavenly inheritance, which had been forfeited by the sin of man. 2. Through whom they had obtained it, in him; by virtue of the merits, the obedience and satisfaction of Christ. 3. Why they obtained it, while others had not. Not that they were more worthy than others, but because they were predestinated, elected, or fore-ordained to salvation, and all the means of it. 4. There is the certainty of the efficacy of predestination. It is according to his purpose; that is, his firm purpose and peremptory decree to bring such things to pass. And this certainly in particular is evinced by a general truth, Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Wherein we may notice. (1.) God's effectual operation, he worketh. The word signifies to work powerfully and efficaciously, so as to overcome all contrary resistance, and all difficulties in the way; which is exactly God's way of working. And this working takes place in the works of creation and providence. (2.) The manner how God works. The plan and scheme according to which his works are framed, is the counsel of his will. His will is his decree and intention; and it is called the counsel of his will, to denote the wisdom of his decrees, his most wise and free determination therein. As God's decree is an act of his will, and so most free, considered in relation to the creatures; so his decree and will are never without counsel; he willeth or decreeth things to be done with the greatest reason and judgment, most wisely as well as freely. (3.) The object of his working after this manner, all things. This cannot be restricted to the blessings which the apostle had been speaking of immediately before, but must be understood of all things whatsoever, and of all their motions and actions as such; which therefore are the object of God's decrees. The text plainly affords this doctrine, viz. DOCT. 'God hath fore-ordained, according to the counsel of his own will, whatsoever comes to pass.' Here I shall, 1. Explain the nature of a decree. 2. Consider the object of God's decrees. 3. Speak of the end of his decrees. 4. Touch at their properties. 5. Make improvement. I. The Nature of a Decree. I. I am to explain the nature of a decree. The text calls it a purpose, a will. For God to decree is to purpose and fore-ordain, to will and appoint that a thing shall be or not be. And such decrees must needs be granted, seeing God is absolutely perfect, and therefore nothing can come to pass without his will; seeing there is an absolute and necessary dependence of all things and persons on God as the first cause. But there is a vast difference betwixt the decrees of God and men; whereof this is the principal: Men's purposes or decrees are distinct from themselves, but the decrees of God are not distinct from himself. God's decrees are nothing else but God himself, who is one simple act; and they are many only in respect of their objects, not as they are in God; even as the one heat of the sun melts wax and hardens clay. To say otherwise is to derogate from the absolute simplicity of God, and to make him a compound being. It is also to derogate from his infinite perfection; for

whatsoever is added to any thing argues a want, which is made up by the accession of that thing, and so introduces a change; but God is absolutely unchangeable. Neither could God's decrees be eternal, if it were not so; for there is nothing eternal but God. II. The Object of God's Decrees. II. I proceed to consider the object of God's decrees. This is whatsoever comes to pass. He worketh all things, says the text. God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass; and nothing comes to pass but what he has decreed to come to pass. We may consider the extent of the divine decree under the three following heads. 1. God has decreed the creation of all things that have a being. 2. He has decreed to rule and govern the creatures which he was to make. 3. He has decreed the eternal state of all his rational creatures. First, God decreed to rear up this stately fabric of the world, the heavens and the earth, the sea and the land, with all the great variety of creatures which inhabit them. There are myriads of holy angels in heaven, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, angels and archangels. There are many shining luminaries in the firmament, the sun, and the moon, and innumerable glittering stars. There is a great variety of creatures on the earth, animals, plants, trees, and minerals, with various forms, shapes, colours, smells, virtues, and qualities. The sea is inhabited by many creatures, Psalms 104:25. Now, God decreed to make all these things, Revelation 4:11. 'Thou hast created all things.' Secondly, God hath decreed the government of all his creatures. He preserves and upholds them in their beings, and he guides and governs them in all their motions and actions. He is not only the general spring and origin of all the motions and actions of the creatures, but he appoints and orders them all immediately. 1. He has decreed all their motions and actions: 'For (says the apostle) of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.' Romans 11:1-36.ult. This is clear from God's knowing all these things before they come to pass; which knowledge of them must needs be in the decree, upon which the coming to pass of all things depends. Not only good things, but evil things fall within the compass of his holy decree. Evils of punishment are truly good, being the execution of justice, as it is good in a magistrate to punish evildoers. God owns himself to be the author of these evils, Amos 3:6. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' And yet he has decreed the effecting of these. As for the evils of sin, these also fall within the compass of the decree of God, as is clear in the case of crucifying Christ, Acts 2:23. 'Him (says the apostle to the Jews) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' And says the apostle, Acts 4:27-28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.' This appears also in the case of Pharaoh refusing to let Israel go, and pursuing them when they had gone, whose heart God hardened, Exodus 14:4; and in the sin of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt; of which Joseph says, Genesis 45:8. 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' It is true, God decreed not the effecting of sin, for then he should have been the author of it, but he decreed the permission of sin. And though sin in itself is evil, yet God's permitting it is good, seeing he can bring good out of it; and it is just in him to permit it, where he is not bound to hinder it. Yet this is not a naked permission, whereby the thing may either come to pass or not, but such as infers a certainty of the event, so that in respect of the event the sin cannot but come to pass. Hence our Lord says, Matthew 18:7. 'Wo unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come.' And says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 11:19. 'There must be heresies among you.' See also Acts 4:27-28. forecited. 2. And not only necessary things, as the burning of the fire, but the most free acts of the creature, and the

most casual things, fall under the divine decree. Free acts, as Proverbs 20:1. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.' To this purpose are the foresaid instances of the Jews, Pharaoh, and Joseph's brethren.—The most casual, as in the case of the casual slaughter mentioned, Exodus 21:12-13, and Deuteronomy 19:3. where mention is made of the Lord's delivering the person slain into the hands of the slayer, though he had no intention to slay him. Such also is the case of lots, Proverbs 16:33. 'The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' This holds also in the case of sparrows, and the hairs of the head falling, which cannot be done without God, Matthew 10:29-30. And thus not only great things, but small things fall within the compass of the divine decree. But more especially let us consider God's decrees with respect to the government of rational creatures. This we may take up in the following particulars. 1. God has decreed what kingdoms and monarchies should be on the earth, what princes and potentates should rule and govern them, and whether their government should be mild or tyrannical; how long each kingdom should continue, when they should have peace and when war, when prosperity and adversity. We find wonderful discoveries made to Daniel with respect to these things. 2. God bas decreed every thing relating to the lot and condition of particular persons. (1.) He has decreed the time and place of their birth, whether it should be under the law or gospel, in a land of light or darkness; whether among the savage Indians in America, or among the more polite and civilized people of Europe; whether among Mahometans, Papists, or Protestants. All this was decreed by the Lord, who 'hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation,' Acts 17:26. (2.) He hath decreed every man's lot and condition, whether it shall be high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, learned or unlearned. He hath determined the trade and employment they should follow, the particular business they should betake themselves to. Many times God's providence over-rules men's purposes and designs, for fulfilling his own counsels. Matters are sometimes strangely wheeled about, so that not what we or our parents designed, but what God hath purposed shall take place. Amos was meanly employed at first, but God designed him for a more honourable calling: he was taken from the office of a herdman, and gatherer of sycamore fruit, and invested with a commission to prophesy to the people of Israel, Amos 7:14-15. David followed the ewes, and it is like 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. The most part of the apostles were fishermen; but Christ called them to a more high and eminent station, even to be extraordinary officers in his church, and fishers of men. (3.) God hath decreed what relations men shall have in the world. Their wives and children are appointed for them. Hence said Abraham's servant, Genesis 24:44. 'Let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed for my master's son.' That such a woman rather than any other, should be wife to such a man, is by the appointment of Heaven. Men's children are also decreed by God. Hence said Eve, Genesis 4:24. 'God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.' And says the Psalmist, Psalms 127:3. 'Lo children are the heritage of the Lord.' God determines the numbers and names of every man's children. (4.) All the comforts of men's lives are under the divine appointment, both those temporal and spiritual. Hence says the prophet, Isaiah 26:1. 'We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.' (5.) All men's afflictions are determined by a decree of Heaven, Micah 6:9. 'Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' Such are public calamities and distresses, as war, famine and pestilence, all bodily pains and sickness, poverties and pinching straits, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men.

None of these spring out of the dust, or come by chance. The kind and nature of people's troubles, their measure and degree, time and season, continuance and duration, and all the circumstances of them, are determined, and weighed in the scale of his eternal counsel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 3:3. 'No man should be moved by these afflictions: for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.' (6.) The time of every man's life in the world is appointed. Hence says Job, Job 7:1. 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?' And says the same great man, Job 14:5. 'His days are determined: and the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.' The term of our life is fixed and limited, our days are determined, and our months numbered. Hence David prays, Psalms 39:4. 'Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.' Our days are measured; they are as the days of an hireling. As the hireling hath a set time to work in, so every man and woman hath an appointed time for acting and working in this world. We are all pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and in a little time we must go hence and be no more. We are here like men upon a stage to act our parts, and in a short time we must retire within the curtain of death, and others will come in our room. Our glass is continually running, and the day and hour in which it will run out is settled and fixed by the order of Heaven. We find in scripture that God hath often foretold the precise term of particular men's lives. He set a hundred and twenty years to those who lived in the old world before the flood came upon them, Genesis 6:3. He foretold the time of Moses' life, of that of Jeroboam's son, of that of Ahaziah king of Israel, and of many others. All this was from his own decree and counsel. Thirdly, God hath determined the eternal state of all his rational creatures, both men and angels. Our Confession of Faith tells us, agreeably to scripture, chap. 3. art. 3. that 'by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others are fore-ordained to everlasting death.' More particularly, 1. We read of the elect angels, 1 Timothy 5:21. The perseverance and standing of the holy angels in the state of their primitive integrity, and their confirmation therein, was determined by the purpose of God. In the morning of the creation heaven shined with innumerable glittering stars, the angels of light, of whom a vast number are, by their rebellion against God, become wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Now, the good angels are in a supernatural state, without the least danger of change, or any separation from the blessed presence of God in glory, flowing from the continual irradiations of divine grace, which preserves their minds from errors, and their wills from irregular desires; and consequently they cannot sin, nor forfeit their felicity. It was by an eternal decree of God, that he passed by the angels that fell, and doomed them to everlasting misery. The apostle tells us, 2 Peter 2:4. that 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.' And saith Jude, Jude 1:6. 'The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.' Mercy did not interpose to avert or suspend their judgment; but immediately they were expelled from the Divine Presence. Their present misery is insupportable, and worse awaits them. Their judgment is irreversible; they are under the blackness of darkness for ever. They have not the least glimpse of hope to allay their sorrows, and no star-light to sweeten the horrors of their eternal night. It were a kind of mercy to them to be capable of death; but God will never be so far reconciled to them as to annihilate them. Immortality, which is the privilege of their nature, infinitely increases their torment. 2. God hath likewise appointed the final and eternal state of men and women. It is said, Romans 9:21-23.

'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?' (1.) He hath elected some to everlasting life by an irreversible decree, Romans 8:29-30. '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. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Ephesians 1:4. 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' 2 Thessalonians 2:13. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.' From eternity God elected some from among the lost posterity of Adam to everlasting life and glory, according to the good pleasure of his own will. Therefore all is referred by our Saviour to the good pleasure of God, Matthew 11:25-26. And all the means for accomplishing the ends of election are likewise of divine appointment; particularly the redemption of ruined sinners by the death and sufferings of Christ: 'He hath chosen us in Christ,' Ephesians 1:4. The Father did first, in the order of nature, chuse Christ to the Mediatory office, and as the chief corner-stone to bear up the whole building; whence he is called God's elect, Isaiah 42:1. And then he chose a company of lost sinners to be saved by and through Christ; and therefore he is said to predestinate them to be conformed to the image of his Son. (2.) God hath passed by the rest of mankind, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, and hath ordained them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice. Hence Christ is said to be 'a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed,' 1 Peter 2:8. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour,' 2 Timothy 2:19-20. In Jude 1:4. we read of 'ungodly men, who were before of old ordained to condemnation.' And in Romans 9:22-23. we read of 'vessels of mercy, which God had afore prepared unto glory: and of vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.' III. The End of God's Decrees. III. I come to consider the end of God's decrees. And this is no other than his own glory. Every rational agent acts for an end; and God being the most perfect agent, and his glory the highest end, there can be no doubt but all his decrees are directed to that end. 'For—to him are all things,' Romans 11:36. 'That we should be to the praise of his glory,' Ephesians 1:12. In all, he aims at his glory: and seeing he aims at it, he gets it even from the most sinful actions he has decreed to permit. Either the glory of his mercy or of his justice he draws therefrom. Infinite wisdom directs all to the end intended. More particularly, 1. This was God's end in the creation of the world. The divine perfections are admirably glorified here, not only in regard of the greatness of the effect, which comprehends the heavens and the earth, and all things therein; but in regard of the marvelous way of its production. For he made the vast universe without the concurrence of any material cause; he brought it forth from the womb of nothing by an act of his efficacious will. And as he began the creation by proceeding from nothing to real existence, so in forming the other parts he drew them from infirm and indisposed matter, as from a second nothing, that all his creatures might bear the signatures of infinite power. Thus he commanded light to arise out of

darkness, and sensible creatures from an insensible element. The lustre of the divine glory appears eminently here. Hence says David, Psalms 19:1. 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' They declare and manifest to the world the attributes and perfections of their great Creator, even in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. All the creatures have some prints of God stamped upon them, whereby they loudly proclaim and shew to the world his wisdom and goodness in framing them. Hence says Paul, Romans 1:20. 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' 2. The glory of God was his chief end and design in making men and angels. The rest of the creatures glorified God in an objective way, as they are evidences and manifestations of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But this higher rank of beings are endued with rational faculties, and so are capable to glorify God actively. Hence it is said, Proverbs 16:4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself.' If all things were made for him, then man and angels especially, who are the master-pieces of the whole creation. We have our rise and being from the pure fountain of God's infinite power and goodness; and therefore we ought to run towards that again, till we empty all our faculties and excellencies into that same ocean of divine goodness. 3. This is likewise the end of election and predestination. For 'he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, to the praise of the glory of his grace.' That some are ordained to eternal life, and others passed by, and suffered to perish eternally in their sin, is for the manifestation of the infinite perfections and excellencies of God. The glory and beauty of the divine attributes is displayed here with a shining lustre; as his sovereign authority and dominion over all his creatures to dispose of them to what ends and purposes he pleaseth; his knowledge and omniscience, in beholding all things past, present, and to come; his vindictive justice, in ordaining punishments to men, as a just retribution for sin; and his omnipotence, in making good his word, and putting all his threatenings in execution. The glory of his goodness shines likewise here, in making choice of any, when all most justly deserved to be rejected. And his mercy shines here with an amiable lustre, in receiving and admitting all who believe in Jesus into his favour. 4. This was the end that God proposed in that great and astonishing work of redemption. In our redemption by Christ we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of his glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here. Indeed the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and discover one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. His truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory. And this is the end that God proposed in their conversion and regeneration. Hence it is said, Isaiah 43:21. 'This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.' Sinners are adopted into God's family, and made a royal priesthood on this very

design,' 1 Peter 2:9. IV. The Properties of God's Decrees. IV. I come now to consider the properties of God's decrees. 1. They are eternal. God makes no decrees in time, but they were all from eternity. So the decree of election is said to have been 'before the foundation of the world,' Ephesians 1:4. Yea whatever he doth in time, was decreed by him, seeing it was known to him before time, Acts 15:18. 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.' And this foreknowledge is founded on the decree. If the divine decrees were not eternal, God would not be most perfect and unchangeable, but, like weak man, should take new counsels, and would be unable to tell every thing that were to come to pass. 2. They are most wise, 'according to the counsel of his will.' God cannot properly deliberate or take counsel, as men do; for he sees all things together and at once. And thus his decrees are made with perfect judgment, and laid in the depth of wisdom, Romans 11:33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' So that nothing is determined that could have been better determined. 3. They are most free, according to the counsel of his own will; depending on no other, but all flowing from the mere pleasure of his own will, Romans 11:34. 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor?' Whatsoever he decreeth to work without himself, is from his free choice. So his decrees are all absolute, and there are none of them conditional, He has made no decrees suspended on any condition without himself. Neither has he decreed any thing because he saw it would come to pass, or as that which would come to pass on such or such conditions; for then they should be no more according to the counsel of his will, but the creature's will. For God's decrees being eternal, cannot depend upon a condition which is temporal. They are the determinate counsels of God, but a conditional decree determines nothing. Such conditional decrees are inconsistent with the infinite wisdom of God, and are in men only the effects of weakness; and they are inconsistent with the independency of God, making them depend on the creature. 4. They are unchangeable. They are the unalterable laws of heaven. God's decrees are constant; and he by no means alters his purpose, as men do, Psalms 33:11. 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.' Hence they are compared to mountains of brass, Zechariah 6:1. As nothing can escape his first view, so nothing can be added to his knowledge. Hence Balaam said, 'God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Numbers 23:19. The decree of election is irreversible: 'The foundation of God, (says the apostle), standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,' 2 Timothy 2:19. 5. They are most holy and pure. For as the sun darts its beams upon a dunghill, and yet is no way defiled by it; so God decrees the permission of sin, as above explained, yet is not the author of sin: 1 John 1:5. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' James 1:13,James 1:17. 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' 6. Lastly, They are effectual; that is, whatsoever God decrees comes to pass infallibly, Isaiah 46:10. 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' He cannot fall short of what he has determined. Yet the liberty of second causes is not hereby taken away; for the decree of God offers no violence to the creature's will; as appears from the free and unforced actings of Joseph's brethren, Pharaoh, the Jews that crucified Christ, &c. Nor does it take away the contingency of second causes, either in themselves or as to us, as appears by the lot cast into the lap. Nay they are thereby established, because he hath efficaciously foreordained that such effects shall follow on such causes. Before proceeding to the application of this doctrine, it may not be improper to answer some objections

which are brought against the doctrine of the divine decrees. 1. It is objected by some, that if all things that come to pass in time be appointed of God by an irreversible decree, then this seems to make God the author of sin, as if he had ordained that horrid and hateful evil to come into the world, which is so dishonourable to himself, and so destructive to the children of men. In answer to this, you must know, 1. That all sinful actions fall under the divine decree. Though sin itself flows from transgressing the law, yet the futurition of it is from the decree of God. No such thing could ever have been in the world, if it had not been determined by the eternal counsel of Heaven for a holy and just end. This is plainly asserted by the apostle Peter, with respect to the greatest villainy that was ever committed on the earth, namely, the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the hands of sinful men, Acts 2:23. forecited. And the church gives this account of it, Acts 4:27-28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined before to be done.' There was never such an atrocious crime or higher act of wickedness committed, than the murdering of the Lord of glory. And yet it appears from these texts of scripture, that, in this bloody and horrid scene, wicked men did no more than God's hand and counsel determined before to be done. 2. That the decree of God is properly distinguished into that which is effective, and that which is permissive. (1.) His effective decree respects all the good that comes to pass, whether it be moral or natural goodness. All the actions and motions of the creatures have a natural goodness in them; and even sinful actions considered abstractly from any irregularity, obliquity, or deformity cleaving to them, have a natural goodness in them, so far as they are actions: they have a goodness of being considered purely and simply as actions. Now, God has decreed to effect all these, yea even sinful actions considered purely as natural. For he is the first and universal cause of all things, the fountain and original of all good. And it is said with respect to the oppressions of the church by wicked men, Psalms 115:3. 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased.' (2.) His permissive decree doth only respect the irregularity and pravity that is in sinful actions. God decreed to permit the same, or he determined it to be, himself permitting it. Hence it is said, Acts 14:16. 'In times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.' And God doth nothing in time, but what he did from eternity decree to do. So that the futurition of sin is from the decree of God. God determined that it should be. He did not decree to have any efficiency in sin, considered as such; but he willed that it should be done, himself permitting it. The counsel of God did not determine to do it, but that it should be done. (3.) God decreed the permission of sin for great and glorious ends. It is true, sin in its own nature has no tendency to any good end. If it end in any good, it is from the overruling providence of God, and that infinite divine skill that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness. Now, the great, and glorious end for which God decreed the after-being of sin, is his own glory: and the ends subordinate thereunto are not a few. Particularly, God decreed the futurition of sin, (1.) That he might have occasion of glorifying his infinite wisdom, love, and grace in the redemption and salvation of a company of lost sinners through the death and sufferings of his own dear Son. (2.) That his patience and long suffering in bearing with and forbearing sinners, might be magnified, admired, and adored. (3.) That he might be honoured and glorified by the faith and repentance of his people, and their walking humbly with him. (4.) That his justice might be illustriously displayed and glorified in the eternal damnation of reprobate sinners for their own sins and abominations, sin being the cause of their damnation, though not of their reprobation. Thus God decreed the futurition of sin for these holy and wise

ends, that he might glorify his wisdom in bringing good out of so great an evil, and a greater good than the evil he decreed to permit. (4.) The decree of God about the permission of sin does not infringe the liberty of man's will. For sin doth not follow the decree by a necessity of co-action or compulsion, which indeed would destroy human liberty; but by a necessity of infallibility, which is very consistent with it. It is sufficient unto human liberty, or the freedom of man's will, that a man act without all constraint, and out of choice. Now, this is not taken away by the decree. Men sin as freely as if there were no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there were no liberty. And men sin, not to fulfill God's decree, which is hid from them, but to serve and gratify their vile lusts and corrupt affections. Objection. 2. If God hath determined the precise number of every man's days by an unalterable decree, then the use of means for the preservation of our health and lives is altogether unnecessary; for nothing can frustrate the divine decree. We will certainly live as long as God hath appointed us, whether we use any means or not. And therefore when we are hungry, we need not eat and drink; and when we are sick, we need not take physic, or use any medicines. In answer to this, you must know, that as God hath decreed the end, so he hath decreed the means that are proper for attaining that end; so that these two must not be separated. Though God hath decreed how long we shall live, yet seeing it is his ordinary way to work by means, and he hath commanded and enjoined the use of them to men, therefore it is still our duty to use lawful means for preserving our life and health, and to wait on God in the due use of them, referring the event to his wise determination. In Paul's dangerous voyage to Rome, an angel of the Lord assured him, that God had given him all that sailed with him in the ship; and Paul assured them from the Lord, that there should be no loss of any of their lives: yet when some were about to flee out of the ship, he says to the centurion who had the command, 'Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved,' Acts 27:31. And he exhorted them to take some meat after their long abstinence, telling them, that it was for their health. From which it plainly appears, that as God had decreed to save their lives, so he had decreed to save them in the due use of ordinary means; so that they were to use means, for the preservation of their life and health. And when Hezekiah was recovered from a mortal disease, and received a promise from God that he should have fifteen years added to his days, and the promise was confirmed by a sign, the miraculous going back of the sun, he did not neglect or cast off the use of means: but, as was prescribed by the prophet, he applied a bunch of dried figs to his sore, and used still his ordinary diet. Therefore it is gross ignorance and madness in men to reason so against God's decrees. The Lord, by an unchangeable counsel and purpose, hath decreed and set down all things, and how they shall come to pass; and therefore it is a wrong way of arguing for people to say, If God hath determined how long I shall live, then I shall not die sooner, though I never eat or drink. Objection. 3. If God hath determined the eternal state and condition of men, whether they shall be happy or miserable for ever, then it is in vain to repent and believe, or use any means for their own safety. For if God hath elected them to salvation, they shall certainly be saved, whether they use any means or not; and if they are not elected to everlasting life, all that they can possibly do will be to no purpose at all, for they shall never be saved by it. For answer to this, you must know, 1. That God's decree of election is a great secret, which we ought not to pry into. It is simply impossible for men to know whether they are elected or not, before they believe. Indeed, if a man were certain that he is not elected to eternal life, it would be another case: but as it is not certain that thou art elected, so it is not certain that thou art not elected. You have no means to know either the one or the other certainly, till you get saving faith. Till then the Lord reserves it in his own breast, as a secret which we are not to pry into. For it is

said, Deuteronomy 29:29. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the things of his law.' Here the Lord shews what belongs to him and what belongs to us, and that we should mind our duty, and not busy and perplex ourselves about impertinencies. Whether men be elected or not elected, is a secret that God never discloses to an unbeliever; but that we should believe on Christ is no secret. This is a duty clearly revealed and enjoined by the gospel. 2. It is our duty to look to God's commands, and not to his decrees; to our own duty, and not to his purposes. The decrees of God are a vast ocean, into which many possibly have curiously pried to their own horror and despair; but few or none have ever pried into them to their own profit and satisfaction. Our election is not written in particular in the word of God; but our duty is plainly set down there. If men conscientiously perform their duty, this is the way to come to the knowledge of their election. Men therefore should not question whether they be elected or not, but first believe on Christ, and endeavour diligently to work out their own salvation; and if their works be good, and their obedience true, thereby they will come to a certain knowledge that they were elected and set apart to everlasting life. 3. As God elects to the end, so he elects also to the means. Now, faith and obedience are the means and way to salvation; and therefore, if you be elected to salvation, you are also elected to faith and obedience. See what is said to this purpose, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. 'God hath chosen you to salvation,' there is the end; 'through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,' there is the means which lead to that end. Both are decreed by God. If therefore you heartily and sincerely believe and obey, then your election to salvation stands firm and sure. Nay, further, the scriptures make election to be terminated as well in obedience as salvation. So 1 Peter 1:2. 'Elect (says the apostle) unto obedience, through sanctification of the Spirit.' In the former place it was, 'elect to salvation through sanctification;' but here it is, 'elect to obedience through sanctification;' to denote unto us, that none are elected unto salvation but those that are elected unto obedience. And therefore it is unreasonable, yea, it is contradictory to say, if I am elected, I shall be saved, whether I believe and obey or not; for none are elected to salvation but through faith and obedience. 4. Men do not pry into the decrees of God in other things, but do what they know to be incumbent upon them as their duty. And certainly it is as unreasonable here. When you are dangerously sick, and the physician tells you, that unless you take such and such medicines, your case is desperate; you do not use to reason thus, Then if God hath decreed my recovery, I will certainly be restored to my health, whether I take that course of physic or not; but you presently fall in with the advice given you, and make use of the means prescribed for your health. And will you not do so here? You are dangerously sick and mortally wounded with sin, and God commands you to flee to Christ the only physician that can cure you, and cast yourselves upon him, and you shall certainly be saved. But O, says the sinner, if I knew that God had decreed my salvation, I would venture on Christ; but till once I know this, I must not believe: O how unreasonable is unbelief! The devil's suggestions make poor creatures act as if they were entirely distracted and out of their wits. This is just as if an Israelite stung with the fiery serpents should have said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my cure, I would look upon the brazen serpent, and if he hath decreed it, I will certainly recover whether I look to it or not. If all the stung Israelites had been thus resolved, it is likely they had all perished. Or this is as if one pursued by the avenger of blood, should have set himself down in the way to the city of refuge, where he should have been flying for his life, and said, If God hath decreed my escape, then I will be safe whether I run to the city of refuge or not; but if he hath not decreed it, then it is in vain for me to go thither. Now, would

not men count this a willful casting away of his life, with a careless neglect of that provision which God hath made to save it? Was it not sufficient that a way was made for his escape, and a way feasible enough, the city of refuge being always open? Thus the arms of Christ are always open to receive and embrace poor humbled perishing sinners fleeing to him for help. And will men destroy themselves by suffering Satan to entangle them with a needless, impertinent, and unreasonable scruple? In other cases, if there be no way but one, and any encouraging probability to draw men into it, they run into it without delay, not perplexing and discouraging themselves with the decrees of God. Now, this is thy case, O sinner; Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no other by whom you can be saved; flee to him then as for thy life; and let not Satan hinder thee, by diverting thee to impossibilities and impertinencies. Comply with the call and offer of the gospel. This is present and pertinent duty, and trouble not thyself about the secrets of God. V. Inferences. I conclude all with a few inferences. 1. Has God decreed all things that come to pass? Then there is nothing that falls out by chance, nor are we to ascribe what we meet with either to good or ill luck and fortune. There are many events in the world which men look upon as mere accidents, yet all these come by the counsel and appointment of Heaven. Solomon tells us, Proverbs 16:33. that 'the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord.' However casual and fortuitous things may be with respect to us, yet they are all determined and directed by the Lord. When that man drew a bow at a venture, 1 Kings 22:34. it was merely accidental with respect to him, yet it was God that guided the motion of the arrow so as to smite the king of Israel rather than any other man. Nothing then comes to pass, however casual and uncertain it may seem to be, but what was decreed by God. 2. Hence we see God's certain knowledge of all things that happen in the world, seeing his knowledge is founded on his decree. As he sees all things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees all things to come in the glass of his own will; of his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; and of his permitting will, if he hath decreed to suffer them. Hence his declaration of things to come is founded on his appointing them, Isaiah 44:7. 'Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming and shall come? let them shew unto them.' He foreknows the most necessary things according to the course of nature, because he decreed that such effects should proceed from and necessarily follow such and such causes: and he knows all future contingents, all things which shall fall out by chance, and the most free actions of rational creatures, because he decreed that such things should come to pass contingently or freely, according to the nature of second causes. So that what is casual or contingent with respect to us, is certain and necessary in regard of God. 3. Whoever be the instruments of any good to us, of whatever sort, we must look above them, and eye the hand and counsel of God in it, which is the first spring, and be duly thankful to God for it. And whatever evil of crosses or afflictions befalls us, we must look above the instruments of it to God. Affliction doth not rise out of the dust or come to men by chance; but it is the Lord that sends it, and we should own and reverence his hand in it. So did David in the day of his extreme distress. 2 Samuel 16:11. 'Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.' We should be patient under whatever distress befalls us, considering that God is our party, Job 2:10. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' This would be a happy means to still our quarrellings at adverse dispensations. Hence David says, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,' Psalms 39:9. 4. See here the evil of murmuring and complaining at our lot in the world. How apt are ye to quarrel with God, as if he were in the wrong when his dealings with you are not according to your own

desires and wishes? You demand a reason, and call God to an account, Why am I thus? why so much afflicted and distressed? why so long afflicted? and why such an affliction rather than another? why am I so poor and another so rich? Thus your hearts rise up against God. But you should remember, that this is to defame the counsels of infinite wisdom, as if God had not ordered your affairs wisely enough in his eternal counsel. We find the Lord reproving Job for this, chap. Matthew 2:1-23. 'shall he that contendeth with the Lord instruct him?' When ye murmur and repine under cross and afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove him as if he were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it, as if you had more wisdom and justice to dispose of your lot, and to carve out your own portion in the world. This is upon the matter the language of such a disposition, Had I been on God's counsel, I had ordered this matter better; things had not been with me as now they are. O presume not to correct the infinite wisdom of God, seeing he has decreed all things most wisely and judiciously. 5. There is no reason for people to excuse their sins and falls, from the doctrine of the divine decrees. Wicked men, when they commit some villainy or atrocious crime, are apt to plead thus for their excuse, Who can help it? God would have it so; it was appointed for me before I was born, so that I could not avoid it. This is a horrid abuse of the divine decrees, as if they did constrain men to sin: Whereas the decree is an immanent act of God, and so can have no influence, physical or moral upon the wills of men, but leaves them to the liberty and free choice of their own hearts; and what sinners do, they do most freely and of choice. It is a horrid and detestable wickedness to cast the blame of your sin upon God's decree. This is to charge your villainy upon him, as if he were the author of it. It is great folly to cast your sins upon Satan who tempted you, or upon your neighbour who provoked you; but it is a far greater sin, nay horrid blasphemy, to cast it upon God himself. A greater affront than this cannot be offered to the infinite holiness of God. 6. Lastly, Let the people of God comfort themselves in all cases by this doctrine of the divine decrees; and, amidst whatever befalls them, rest quietly and submissively in the bosom of God, considering that whatever comes or can come to pass, proceeds from the decree of their gracious friend and reconciled Father, who knows what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. O what a sweet and pleasant life would ye have under the heaviest pressures of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquility of mind would you enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how sharp soever it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of his will!

S. Of the Duty Which God Requireth of Man

OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRETH OF MAN. by Thomas Boston Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick, Scotland excerpted from his Commentary on the Shorter Catechism

1 Samuel 15:22.—And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? THIS text is a reproof given to one that wore a crown, teaching him, that though he was Israel's sovereign, he was God's subject. Saul had been sent, by God's express command, on an expedition against the Amalekites, with a solemn charge utterly to 'destroy all that they had, and spare them not; but to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass,' 1 Samuel 15:3. The expedition was crowned with success. Saul having destroyed all the people, took Agag their king prisoner, and saved the best of the cattle; and when quarrelled by Samuel for this his partial obedience to the heavenly mandate, he pretended that the people had spared the sheep and oxen, which had been devoted to destruction as well as the people, to sacrifice unto the Lord in Gilgal. The words of the text contain Samuel's answer to this silly apology: Hath the Lord (says he) as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? importing, that obedience to the voice and will of God is more acceptable to him than all the sacrifices in the world. In the words we may notice, 1. The duty which God requires of men, which is obedience. This is required of man, of all men, rulers and ruled: those whom others must obey, must obey God. 2. What they are to obey the voice of the Lord, whereby he manifests his will: it is his revealed will, whatever way he is pleased to notify it to them. Hence the obedience in the text is called hearkening; the soul first receiving the knowledge of God's mind, and then complying with it. 3. The excellency and eminency of this duty. (1.) God delights in it. (2.) All other things must yield to it, but it to none. Burnt-offerings and sacrifices, even the fat of them, are nothing in comparison of this. The text affords the following doctrine, viz. DOCT. 'The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.' In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall, I. Explain it; and, II. Deduce a few inferences for application. I. For explanation, let us consider the duty which man owes to God, of whom he requires it, the rule of it, the properties of it, and on what accounts we owe it. First, Let us consider the duty which man owes unto God. That is obedience. We are in a state of subjection to God. He is our superior, and his will we are to obey in all things. He is our King, and we must obey him as his subjects, by complying with all his statutes and ordinances. He is our Father, and we must shew him all respect, reverence, and affection, as his dutiful children. He is our Lord and Master, and we must yield him the most cheerful and unlimited service, as is our reasonable duty. He is our supreme Lawgiver, and we must receive the law at his mouth, every law and precept, every ordinance that is stamped with his authority, whatever is subscribed with a 'Thus saith the Lord,' readily obeying it. Secondly, Let us consider of whom the Lord requires this duty. Of every man without exception, capable of knowing his will. The greatest are fast bound to his obedience as the meanest, the poor as well as the rich, Pagans as well as Christians, kings as well as subjects. No man can be free from this duty more than he can be a God to himself. Not a son or daughter sprung from Adam can plead an exemption from this duty of obeying the will of the Lord.

It is an easy yoke wreathed upon the necks of all, and is imposed on them by an indispensable law. Thirdly, Let us consider the rule of that obedience. It is the will of God. His will is our supreme law. Not the secret will of God; for that which God never revealed to man, cannot be his rule; but the revealed will of God, Deuteronomy 29:29. 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children.' Men may fulfil the secret will of God, and determination of his providence, and be deeply guilty, as we see the Jews did in crucifying the Lord of glory, Acts 2:23. under the guilt of which heinous sin that people groan to this day. But conformity to God's revealed will is our duty. Whatever is revealed in the sacred scriptures as the will of God, whether relating to what man is to believe, or what he is to practice, is to be performed and done, and that at our peril. Fourthly, Let us consider the properties of this obedience which God requires of man. 1. It is sincere obedience to his will. Hence David says, 'I was upright before him,' Psalms 18:23. Hypocritical obedience may please men, but not God, the searcher of hearts. It was the commendation of the obedience of the Romans, that they 'obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered them,' Romans 6:17. That sacrifice that wants the heart, will never be accepted on God's altar. God weighs not the affections of his people to him by their actions, so much as their actions by their affections, as in the case of Abraham's offering up Isaac, Hebrews 11:17.; in that of the Israelites offering to go into the promised land, Numbers 14:40. compared with Numbers 14:42, Numbers 14:44. which was an act of downright disobedience to the commandment of the Lord, notified to them by Moses. All obedience without uprightness or sincerity, is a mere counterfeit, an empty pretence, which will be rejected with abhorrence. 2. It must be constant obedience. We must 'keep God's law continually, for ever and ever,' as the Psalmist resolved to do, Psalms 119:44. Man is ever doing something, yet he must always abide within the hedge of the law. Our obedience to God is all wrong when it comes only by fits, as heat in an ague, or is broke off like those that go to sea for pleasure, who come ashore when the storm rises. God is unchangeable, and we must be constant and steady in obeying his will; at no time daring to act contrary to it. 3. It must be tender obedience. We must 'abstain from all appearance of evil,' 1 Thessalonians 5:22. We must 'hate even the garment spotted with the flesh,' Jude 1:23. We must not rub on this hedge, nor come too near the borders of wickedness. We have to do with a jealous God, whom whorish looks will offend, Ezekiel 6:9. We cannot be too nice in obedience. We must not, in order to practice, examine whether it be a great or a little sin. All such distinctions are highly criminal, and inconsistent with the disposition of the person of a tender heart, who hates every sin of every kind, whether great or small, the wicked act as well as the wicked thought. A tender, a relenting heart, a heart afraid of sin, and cautious of the least wrong thought or act, is that which God requires, and the obedience resulting from it is the tender obedience here required. 4. It must be ready obedience, like that of those of whom the Psalmist speaks, 'As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me,' Psalms 18:24. We must do, and not delay; but be like the good David, who said, 'I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments,' Psalms 119:60. We are not to dispute, but obey; 'not to confer with flesh and blood,' Galatians 1:16. It was Jonah's sin that he did not readily comply; and it was Abraham's commendation, that he did not dispute God's orders, but 'went not knowing whither he went,' Hebrews 11:8. The least intimation of God's will, either as to doing or suffering, must be immediately and readily complied with, notwithstanding all discouragements and carnal reasonings. God's call and command must drown the voice of carnal ease, and all arguments arising from Spare thyself. Does God say? we must immediately go whither he directs us: does he

say, Come? we must instantly obey the summons, saying, Lord, we are here, ready to do what thou pleasest to order or enjoin us. Without this readiness and alacrity, all our obedience is stark naught, a matter of mere force and compulsion; and therefore unacceptable to the great God. whom we are bound to serve with a perfect heart and a willing mind. 5. It must be universal obedience, Psalms 119:6. in 'having a respect unto all God's commandments.' The whole of the commands of God have the same divine stamp upon them. They are one golden chain: whoso takes away one link, breaks the chain; if the connection be destroyed, the whole machine falls asunder. Hear what the apostle James says on this head, James 2:10-11. 'Whosoever shall keep the law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.' Obedience to one command will never sanctify disobedience to another. The contempt shewn to one is a contempt of the one Lawgiver who appointed the whole. Hear what Christ, the glorious Legislator of the church, hath said on this article, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' Thus the transgressing of one of the least of God's commandments, if any of them can justly be called such, is a breach of the others, however great and important, and that because the authority of God, that gives sanction to the whole, is slighted and contemned. Whoso makes no conscience of any one known duty, discovers hypocrisy in the rest. 6. It must be absolute obedience, like that of Abraham, who, when called to go out into a place which he was not acquainted with, went accordingly, 'not knowing whither he went,' Hebrews 11:8. Subjects are obedient to magistrates, people to pastors, wives to husbands, children to parents; but absolute obedience is due to none but God: for we are to call no man father upon earth, Matthew 23:9. If their commands be contradicted by God's, they are not to be obeyed; but though God's commands be contradicted by all the world, we must obey them, as the disciples refused to obey the commands of the Jewish council, in not preaching in the name of Jesus, because they clashed with the orders of their exalted Master, Acts 4:19. The most unreserved and unlimited obedience is due to the will and command of the great Lord of heaven and earth, and that without exception or reserve, say to the contrary who will. 7. Lastly, It must be perfect; though now in our fallen state we cannot give any obedience that deserves that epithet. God may and does require of all men in whatsoever state, Matthew 5:1-48.ult. 'Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Though he accepts sincere obedience from those that are in Christ, yet he requires of them perfect obedience, and every imperfection is their sin. Though he has not suspended their justification on their perfection, yet it is what they naturally owe to God, whose law is perfect, and must have a perfect obedience performed to it, either by man himself or his surety. The believer, sensible of his utter incapacity to perform such an obedience to the holy law of God, renounces all his own sinful and imperfect, though sincere obedience, and betakes himself to the complete obedience of his Surety, and presents it as his own to God, which he accepts. In short, all true and acceptable obedience to the will of God flows from a right principle, that of faith and love in the heart. Faith is the hand that unites the soul to Christ, and obedience to God is the fruit of that union. Love is the spring and source of it; for he that loveth Christ, keepeth his commandments. And it must be directed to a right end, namely, the glory of God. We are not to obey God, in order to stop the mouth of a natural conscience, or gain applause among men, but to grow more like God, and bring more honour and glory to him. Fifthly, Let us consider on what accounts do we owe this obedience to God. On these principally, viz. l. Because he is our great and glorious Creator, to

whom we owe our life and being. He is our Lord, and we are his subjects; he is our Master, and we are his servants. And therefore it is just and right that we should obey him, and conform to his will. He is every thing that speaks an authority to command us, and that can challenge an humility in us to obey. Man holds all of God, and therefore owes all the operations capable to be produced by those faculties, to the sovereign power that endued him with them. Man had no being but from him, and he hath no motion without him; he should therefore have no being but for him, and no motion but according to his will. To call him Lord, and not to act in subjection to him, is to mock and put an affront upon him. Hence it is said, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' Luke 6:46. 2. Because he is our chief end, the chief and last end of all being. The Lord hath made all things for himself; and of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. His glory should be the ultimate end of all our actions, and the mark to which they should all be directed. He gave being to all things, that they might shew forth his praise. All the brute creatures, things animate and inanimate, do this in a passive manner; but men and angels, who are rational agents, are bound to do this actively; and they are designed by God for this very end and purpose. 3. Because he is the conserving cause of all. As he gave man a being, so he upholds and preserves him therein, by his mighty power. The preservation of the creatures is as it were a continued creation; and in order to it there is necessary a continual exertion of divine power, and a constant efflux of providential influence, without which they could not move and act at all. As therefore the life and motions of men depend entirely upon God as their upholder, so that life and those motions should be employed for promoting his glory, and promoting his will. 4. Because of the eminency of his nature, which founds his supreme dominion over us. God is the most glorious and excellent of all beings, and the source and spring of all other beings whatsoever. He is possessed of all perfections in an infinite and transcendent manner. Whatever perfections, excellencies, and amiable qualities, are scattered among the creatures, they all unite in him in the utmost perfection, and in him they shine with the most resplendent glory.—And therefore he has a just title to the homage and obedience of all his creatures. 5. Because he is our good and gracious Benefactor, from whose bountiful hand all our mercies do flow. It is in him that we live, move, and have our being. Our health, strength, time, and all blessings, spiritual or temporal, that we enjoy, are the fruits of his goodness and providential care. Now, this lays strong obligations upon us to serve and obey him. We find the Lord aggravating the rebellion of the Jews from the care he had taken in bringing them up, and their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, Isaiah 1:2. 'I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me,' which clearly implies, that the benefits he had bestowed upon them were strong obligations to an ingenuous observance of him; and we find him threatening to deprive them of the blessings he had bestowed upon them, and to bring great distress upon them for the neglect of this duty, Deuteronomy 28:47, &c. 6. Lastly, Because he is our Governor and supreme Lawgiver. He is a Lawgiver to all, to irrational as well as rational creatures. The heavens have their ordinances, Job 38:33. All the creatures have a law imprinted on their beings, but rational creatures have divine statutes inscribed on their hearts, as Romans 2:14-15. 'When the Gentiles, which have not the [written] law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.' And they have laws more clearly and fully set before them in the word. The sole power of making laws does originally reside in God, James 4:12. 'There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.' He only hath power to bind the conscience. And therefore to him obedience is due from all to whom he has prescribed laws. II. I come now to deduce some

inferences. Inf. 1. Does God require from men obedience to his revealed will? Then, in whatsoever state a man is, he owes obedience to the will of God; and therefore, in the saddest of sufferings, even in hell, men properly sin against God,—For this obedience is founded on the natural dependence of the creature on its Creator, and the creature can no more be free of it than it can be a god to itself. Much more God's exalting men in the world gives them no allowance to be vile. Whatever men's state be, God requires of them obedience to his will therein; and they are rebels if they with-hold it, and shall be dealt with as such accordingly. 2. The doing of what God does not command can be no acceptable service or obedience to God. Our duty to God is not to be measured by our imaginations, but by the revealed will of God. Therefore, when men make those things to be duties which no revelation from the Lord makes to be so, the Lord may well say, 'who hath required these things at your hand?' (Isaiah 1:12.) Nothing but what is commanded of God can lawfully be the object of our duty. 3. Those who never heard the gospel will not be condemned for their not believing it; for the revelation of God's will must go before our actual obligation to do it, Romans 2:12. 'As many as have sinned without law, [that is, the written or revealed law of God] shall also perish without law.' This ought to stir up all who bear the Christian name, to be vigorous and lively in obeying God, particularly the great command of believing in the name of his Son; as considering, that whosoever doth not so obey and believe the gospel, shall be damned, Mark 16:16. 4. All men are allowed for themselves to examine the will of their superiors, whether in church or state, to see whether it be not against the will of God; and if it be so, not to obey it, 1 Corinthians 10:15. The Bereans were commended for so doing, Acts 17:11. There is a difference betwixt subjection and obedience. These two may be separated in our dealings with men that are our superiors; we may and must refuse obedience to them in evil actions, while subjection to them remains in other things. Thus the apostles shewed subjection to the Jewish rulers, while they refused to obey their unlawful commands, Acts 4:8-9,Acts 4:19. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, when they in any respect clash with his written word. (WCF 20.2) To obey men's unlawful commands, is to sin against God. But in our relation to God, we owe him both subjection and obedience in all things. 5. Let us remember then, that we owe a duty to God, and that is, that we obey his will. Let us therefore lay out ourselves to do his will, and give that sincere, constant, tender, ready, universal, and perfect obedience to him in all things which he requires, looking for acceptance with God through the merits and mediation of Christ; praying to him, that he may graciously forgive all our acts of disobedience, and cover our very imperfect and sinful obedience with the perfect and complete obedience of his Son, who fulfilled all righteousness in the room of his people. 6. Lastly, Let believers be excited to yield this obedience to the will of God, as they have the most noble encouragement thereto, namely, that whatever God requires of them as an article of duty, there is a promise of ability and strength for the performance thereof contained in his word. Thus he says, Ezekiel 36:27. 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.'—The Lord puts no piece of service in the hands of his people, but he will afford them sufficient supplies of grace for the doing thereof. Let them not, then, decline any duty he lays before them.

1

S. Of the Fall of Our First Parents

OF THE FALL OF OUR FIRST PARENTS

Genesis 3:6-7. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked : and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

GOD made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. Man being in honour, abode not. He soon fell from the happy and holy state in which he was created. In the text we have three things to be considered.

1. The fall of our first parents from their state of primitive integrity ; it was by their both eating of the forbidden fruit, and consequently sinning against God, Genesis 3:6. And they were immediately sensible that they were fallen from that holy and happy state, Genesis 3:7. This appears two ways. (1.) By their knowledge of their nakedness. Some suppose, that their bodies, before their fall, had a divine glory and lustre on them, which was immediately taken away when they sinned, and they saw that this beautiful covering was now gone. Most part of interpreters understand it of their seeing their nakedness with grief and shame, from a sense of their guilt contracted, and of that sinful concupiscence they found now working in them. Thus the eyes of their minds were opened, which Satan had blinded before. (2.) By their going about to cover their bodies with the broad leaves of the fig-tree. All this clearly holds forth their sense, though it was no holy sense, of their shameful fall.

2. That action by which they fell, their sinning against God, Genesis 3:6. viz. by eating the forbidden fruit. They broke God’s express command, forbidding them, under pain of death, to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And immediately after this wicked deed they saw they were naked.

3. How they fell. They fell of their own free-will being left to their freedom, Genesis 3:6. The woman saw that the tree was good for food, &c. There was no force or compulsion here ; all proceeded from free choice. Their eyes saw the fruit, their hearts coveted it, their hands took it, and their mouths ate it. The doctrinal truth deducible from the text is,

DOCT. ’ Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God.’

Two things are here to be considered.

I. The fall of our first parents.

II. How or what way they fell.

I. Let us consider the fall of our first parents. And here I will shew, 1. That man is fallen.

2. W hereby He fell, or what cast him down.

3. What He fell from.

First, I am to shew that man is fallen, and that our first parents did not continue in the estate wherein they were created, but fell from it. This is clear,

1. From the express narrative of this fatal event given by Moses, Gen. iii. from which it appears, that the devil entering into a serpent, artfully tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, in direct opposition to the express command of God, prohibiting it under a dreadful penalty; that she prevailed upon Adam to follow her example ; that they were both immediately stung with remorse and horror for what they had done ; and perceiving themselves to be naked, they fell a-sewing fig-leaves together for a covering to their bodies; that hearing the voice of the. Lord God in the garden, they did, as an evidence of their guilt, and of the privation of light in their minds, hide themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden ; that being called to account for their conduct, the woman threw the blame on the serpent, and the man on the woman; and that both received sentence from their offended Creator and Judge, expressive of their future misery; though at the same time God was pleased to give them a revelation of the method of salvation by a Redeemer, in the promise respecting the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. All this amounts to a plain proof that man has fallen from the holy and happy state he was placed in at his creation.

2. From the doleful experience of their posterity, Romans 5:12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all man, for that all have sinned.' When we see the whole race of mankind born beggars, surely we may conclude that their father became bankrupt ; for he once had a happy portion to transmit to his posterity, which he foolishly squandered away. And the misery attending upon us now, is, that we are pursued for our father's debt as well as our own, without having a farthing to pay.

Secondly, We may inquire, How did Adam fall, or what cast him down ? It was his sinning against God. While our first parents held with God, they stood ; but when they departed from him, they fell. What their sin was more particularly, will fall to be shewn afterwards. They thought to rise by their sin, affecting to be as gods, Genesis 3:5-6. but it was their ruin. Seeking more they lost what they had.

Thirdly, It may be asked, What did they fall from? The state wherein they were created. Now, this was a state of the greatest holiness and felicity. When they sinned,

1. They fell from a holy into a sinful state. They lost the image of God. Observe the opposition betwixt the image of God and that of Adam, Genesis 5:1, Genesis 5:3. There we are told, 'that God made man in his own likeness,' or image ; and that Adam beget a son 'in his own likeness,' even Seth, from whom the whole human race is sprung. Sin was a turning from God as their chief end, and making themselves their chief end; whereby all their uprightness behoved to be lost. It broke the whole law of God at one touch, and violently struck against God and man's neighbour, that is, his posterity; and so could not but waste and defile the conscience. This was the sense of the threatening, ' In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' And in this unholy state are all born of the first man.

(1.) They lost their knowledge, and fell under horrible blindness. Witness their fig-leaf cover for shrouding their nakedness, and their hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord, Genesis 3:7-8. A plain indication of their falling into dreadful ignorance of the Divine Being, the opposite of that great knowledge they had of him in their primitive state of integrity.

(2.) They lost the righteousness of their will, Ecclesiastes 7:29. And they fell under an aversion to God. Witness their running away from him, Ecclesiastes 7:8. their excusing their sin, transferring the guilt every one off them selves,'till it landed at length on God himself, Ecclesiastes 7:12.

(3.) They lost the holiness of their affections, which immediately fell into confusion and disorder. Witness their covering their nakedness. While they were innocent, though naked, they were not ashamed; but that jewel being gone, the irregularity of their affections began to appear in discovering themselves to be naked, by the evil operation of concupiscence in their minds.

2. They fell from their happy state into a miserable one. 0 what a fearful overturn was made by their sin.

(1.) Horror of conscience seizes them, Ecclesiastes 7:8. appearing in flying from the divine presence; which nothing but guilt, clasping as a serpent about them, could have induced them to do. Death was threatened in case of transgression, Genesis 2:17. They both died spiritually, and were bound with the cords of temporal and eternal death.

(2.) They are driven out of paradise, excommunicated and declared incapable of communion with God in the tree of life in the garden, Genesis 3:23. `The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,' as a divorced woman out of the house of her husband, as the word signifies. Nay, God drove out the man, expelling him from that pleasant and delightful place, which he had forfeited by his transgression, Genesis 3:24.

(3.) The. woman, the first transgressor, is condemned to sorrow and pain in breeding, bearing, and bringing forth children, Genesis 3:16. which, as some observe, is greater in women than other creatures. And frequently women lose their lives in the case.

(4.) She is put under a yoke of subjection to her husband, Genesis 3:16. Not but that the woman was subject to him before, but it was to a gentle and loving guide : but now all her desires are subjected to her husband, to grant them or deny them as he sees fit, because she ate of the forbidden fruit without asking his advice, which now, because of his and her corruption, becomes a heavy yoke.

(5.) The ground is cursed for man's sake ; under the influence of which curse it is barren of wholesome fruits, which it does not yield without heavy labour and diligent cultivation, but fruitful in noxious plants, as thorns and thistles, Genesis 3:17.

(6.) Man is condemned to singular anxiety, to weary, toilsome, and oftentimes fruitless labour, whether it be the labour of the hands or of the mind, Genesis 3:17, Genesis 3:19. ; for this last is to be taken into the account too, as appears from Ecclesiastes 1:13, Ecclesiastes 1:18. ` I gave my heart (says the preacher), to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven : this sore travail bath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'

II. Let us next consider, how or what way upright man fell. It was so that our first parents sinned, being left to the freedom of their own will. For understanding of this let us consider the following things.

1. That our first parents had a freedom of will. Freedom of will is a liberty in the will, whereby of its own accord, freely and spontaneously, without any force upon it, it chuses or refuses what is proposed to it by the understanding. And this freedom of will man bath in whatever state he be. But there is a great difference of the freedom of the will in the different states of man. In the natural corrupt state, man has a free will only to evil, Genesis 6:5. ` Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.' Ephesians 2:1. 'He is dead in trespasses and sins.' He freely chuseth evil without any force on his will ; and he cannot do otherwise, being under the bondage of sin. In the state of grace, man has a freewill, partly to good and partly to evil. Hence the apostle says, Romans 7:22, Romans 7:24. ` I delight in the law of God after the inward man. 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.' In this state the will sometimes chuses that which is good, and sometimes that which is evil. This freedom of will is in all regenerate persons who have in some measure recovered the image of God. They chuse good freely by virtue of a principle of grace wrought in them by the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit ; yet through the remainders of corruption that abides in them, their wills are sometimes inclined to that which is evil. In the state of glory, man has a free will to good only. In this state the blessed chuse good freely ; and being confirmed in a holy state, they cannot sin. The freedom of will that man had in the state of innocence was different from all these. In that state he had a freedom of will both to good and evil; and so had a power wholly to chuse good, or wholly to chuse evil : which differences it from the freedom of will in the state of grace. He had a free will to good, yea, the natural set of his will was to good only, Ecclesiastes 7:29. being ' made upright ;' but it was liable to change through the power of temptation, and so free to evil also, as mournful experience has evidenced. Alan was created holy and righteous, and received a power from God constantly to persevere in goodness, if he would ? yet the act of perseverance was left to the choice and liberty of his own will. To illustrate this a little, we may observe some resemblance of it in nature. God creates the eye, says one, and puts into it the faculty of seeing, and withal he adds to the eye necessary helps by the light of the sun. As for the act of seeing, it is left to man's liberty ; for he may see if he will, and if he will he may shut his eyes. The physician, again, by his art procures an appetite, and provides convenient food for the patient : but the act of eating is in the plea, sure of the patient ; for he may eat, or abstain from it if be will. Thus God gave Adam strength and power to persevere in righteousness, but the will he left to himself.

Let no man quarrel, that God made Adam liable to change in his goodness ; for if he had been unchangeably holy, he behoved to be so either by nature or by free grace ; if by nature, that were to make him God; if of free grace, then there was no wrong done him in with-holding what was not due. And he would have got the grace of confirmation, if he had stood the time of his trial.

Secondly, God left our first parents to the freedom of their own will ; and was in no respect the cause of their falling.

1. The Lord did not withdraw any of that strength and ability which he had bestowed upon them in their creation. There was no subtraction of any grace that was requisite for their standing. God is

not like man to give and recall again ; for his gifts are without repentance. Adam left God before lie was forsaken by him.

2. The Lord did not infuse any vicious inclinations into man. There was no internal impulsion from God, exciting him to eat the forbidden fruit. He neither moved him to sin, nor approved of it, but forbade it under the severest penalty. It is altogether inconsistent with the divine purity to incline the creature to sin. As God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempteth he any man. It is extremely injurious to his infinite wisdom to think, that lie would deface and spoil that admirable work which he had composed with so much design and counsel. And it is highly dishonourable to his immense goodness. He loved his creature, the master piece of his works ; and love is an inclination to do good. It was impossible therefore, that God should induce man to sin, or withdraw that power from him which was necessary to resist the temptation, when the consequence must be his inevitable ruin. But by their being left to the freedom of their own will, we are to understand God's with-holding of that further grace (which he was nowise bound to give them) that would have infallibly prevented their falling into sin. God only permitted this fall. No doubt be could have hindered either Satan to tempt, or man to have yielded ; but in his holy wise providence, without which a sparrow cannot fall, far less all mankind, he permitted Satan to tempt, that is, he did not hinder him, which he was not obliged to do. It was in man's power to continue in his obedience or not. God was not obliged to hinder his fall. As he brings light out of darkness, order out of confusion and life out of death, so he knew how to bring good out of evil, and glory to himself out of man's fall. Adam's fall was perfectly voluntary ; his own will was the sole cause of it, as will plainly appear, if you consider.

(1.) That while he continued innocent, he had a sufficient power to persevere in his holy state. God created him with a perfection of grace. If he bad pleased, he might have effectually resisted the temptation and continued stedfast in his duty to God; and God was under no obligation to give him that further actual grace which would have effectually kept him up. And this grace be was bound neither to give nor continue with him.

(2.) That the devil did only allure, he could not ravish his consent. Though his malice be infinite, yet his power is restrained and limited by the omnipotent hand of Jehovah, that he cannot fasten an immediate, much less an irresistible, impression on the will. He therefore made use of an external object to invite man to sin. Now, objects have no constraining force : they are but partial agents, and derive all their efficacy from the faculty unto which they are agreeable. And although now, in our fallen state, sin hath so disordered the flesh, that there is great difficulty in resisting those objects that pleasantly insinuate themselves ; yet, in the state of innocence, there was such an universal rectitude in Adam, and so entire a subjection of the sensual appetite to the superior power of reason, that he might have obtained an easy conquest. A resolute negative bad made him victorious ; by a strong denial, he had baffled that proud spirit.

(3.) That Adam's disobedience was the effect of his own choice. For a specious object was conveyed through the unguarded sense to his fancy, and from that to his understanding, which, by a vicious careless neglecting to consider the danger, commended it to the will, and that resolved to embrace it. Now, it is plain and undeniable, that the action which resulted from the direction of the mind, and the choice of the will, was absolutely free. Besides, as the regret that is mixed 'with an action is a certain character that the person is under restraint; so the delight that attends it is a

clear evidence that he is free. When the appetite is drawn by the lure of pleasure, the more violent, the more voluntary is its motion. Now, the representation of the forbidden fruit was under the notion of pleasure : The woman saw that the fruit was good for food, (that is, pleasurable to the palate), pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise, that is, to increase knowledge, which is the pleasure of the mind ; and these electives drew her into the snare. Man was under no necessity to sin. Force and co-action are inconsistent with the nature of the will, and entirely destroys it. Adam might have continued in his obedience if he had pleased. The devil had no power over him to disturb his Felicity. He prevailed against him by simple suasion.

Thirdly, The devil tempted our first parents to sin. The devil in the serpent set on man while he stood. Where observe,

1. It was a true serpent which the devil appeared in. What sort of a serpent it was, is not determined : but it seems to have been a beautiful creature of a shining colour : for in Deuteronomy 7:15. there are serpents spoken of that are in the Hebrew called Seraphim, the very name given to angels, which were wont to appear in a splendid form, it may be like these seraphim ; and so Eve might take the serpent for one of these good angels. But Moses' plain historical narrative leaves no room to doubt that it was a real serpent, representing it to be more subtile than any beast of the field, and as cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field, after the transgression, when it was condemned to go upon its belly, and to eat dust all the days of its life, Genesis 3:1, Genesis 3:14. And it is known that the Egyptians, by the devil's instigation, worshipped serpents. And in the old Greek mysteries they used to carry about a serpent, and cry Evah : A sign of the extraordinary service it had done to the devil.

2. Though Moses makes no mention of the devil in this affair, yet surely lie was the prime instrument in this fate seduction. For seeing serpents cannot speak, and far less reason, we may easily conclude it was the devil, who therefore is called `the old serpent, and a liar and murderer from the beginning,' John 8:44. See Genesis 3:15. Compare Hebrews 2:14. The devil then, one, perhaps the chief, of those rebellious spirits, who by a furious ambition had raised a war in heaven, and were fallen from their obedience and glorious state, designing to corrupt man, and make him a companion with them in their revolt, set about this work, urged by two strong and powerful passions, hatred and envy.

(1.) The devil was prompted to this action by an implacable hatred against God. For being fallen under a fine and irrevocable doom, he looked upon God as an irreconcilable enemy ; and not being able to injure his essence, he struck at his image ; as the fury of some beast discharges itself at the picture of a man. He singled out Adam as the mark of his malice, that, by seducing him from his duty, he might defeat God's design, which was to be honoured by man's free and cheerful obedience ; and so to eclipse the lustre of his excellencies as though he had made man in vain.

(2.) He was solicited by envy, the first native of hell. For having lost the friendship and favour of God, and being cast out of heaven, the happy region of blessedness and joy, the sight of Adam's felicity highly exasperated and accented his grief, that man, who by the condition of his nature was inferior to him, should be prince of the world, and the special friend and favourite of heaven, whilst he himself was a miserable prisoner, under those fatal chains which restrained and tormented him, the power and the wrath of God. This made his state and condition more intolerable. His torment was incapable of any allay, but by rendering man as miserable as himself. And as hatred excited

his envy, so envy inflamed his hatred, and both joined together in mischief. And being thus pushed on, his subtilty being equal to his malice, he contrives a temptation which might be most taking and dangerous to man in his raised and happy state. As soon as Adam was invested with all his glory, the devil, as it were, would dethrone him on the day of his coronation, and bring both him and all his posterity under a curse. Here I shall consider the temptation which was the occasion of man's fall, and the devil's subtilty in managing it.

1. As to the temptation itself, it was very suitable and promising. The devil attempted to seduce him by art, in his propounding the lure of knowledge and pleasure, to inveigle the spiritual and sensitive appetites at once. There were three things in which the desirableness of this fruit was represented, which sets forth the great art and sagacity of Satan.

(1.) Its agreeableness to the palate. It is said, The woman saw the fruit that it was good for food. Satan told her that it was of a most sweet and delicious taste, and would highly gratify her sensual appetite.

(2.) It was pleasant to the eye; a charming and beautiful fruit, which had an inviting aspect.

(3.) There was a desirableness in it to the rational appetite. It was a tree to be desired to make one wise. And the serpent told her, Genesis 3:5. that, upon eating it, their eyes should be opened, and they should be as gods, knowing good and evil. He made Eve believe, that, upon her eating the fruit of that tree, she would be raised and elevated from the human to a kind of divine nature and condition. This was the temptation with which the devil assaulted our first parents in paradise, and prevailed against them.

2. I shall take notice of Satan's subtilty in managing this temptation. We read of his wiles in scripture ; and indeed they are worse than his darts.

(1.) That he might the better succeed in his hellish design, he addressed himself to the woman, the weakest person, and most liable to seduction. He reckoned, and that justly enough, that his attempt would be most successful here, and that she was less able to resist him. He broke over the hedge where it was weakest. He knew very well that he could more easily insinuate and wind himself into her by a temptation. An old experienced soldier, when he is to storm and enter a castle, observes carefully where there is a breach, or how he may enter with most facility : so did Satan here when he assaulted Eve, the weaker vessel. And he tempted the woman first, because he knew, if once he could prevail with her, she would easily entice and draw on her husband. Satan knew very well, that a temptation coming to Adam from Eve, his wife, in this the infancy of their married state, would be more prevailing and less suspected. Sometimes near relations prove strong temptations. A wife may be a snare, when she dissuades her husband from his duty, or entices him to sin. It is said of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:25. that there was none like unto him, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.' She blew the coals, and made his sin flame out with the greater violence. Satan discovered his great subtilty in tempting Adam by his wife ; for lie with complacency received the temptation, and, by the enticement of this old serpent, committed adultery with the creature, from whence the cursed race of sin and all miseries proceed.

(2.) He assaulted her when alone, in the absence of her husband, and so did the more easily prevail. For 'two are better than one;' and, as Solomon observes, ' a threefold cord is not easily

broken.' Had Adam been present at this fatal congress, it is like the attempt had not been so easily successful.

(3.) The devil's subtilty may be seen here in hiding himself in the body of a serpent, which, before sin entered into the world was not terrible to Eve. Satan crept into a serpent, and spake in it, as the angel did afterwards in Balaam's ass. She was not afraid of this apparition ; for she knew no guilt, and therefore was not subject to any fear. She might look upon this as one of the angels or blessed spirits, which, as they used after this to appear in the shape of men, why might not one of them appear now, and converse with her in the shape of a beautiful serpent; why might not she freely discourse with this, which she reckoned one of those good angels, to whose care and tuition both she and her husband were committed? For we may suppose the, fall of the angels was not yet revealed to her, and she thought this to be a good spirit, otherwise she would certainly have declined all conversation with an apostate angel. Some have supposed, and that not very improbably, that more discourse passed between the serpent and Eve than is recorded, Genesis 3:1-24 and represent the matter thus : The serpent, catching the opportunity of the woman's being at a distance from her husband, makes his address to her with a short speech, saluting her as empress of the world, and giving her a great many encomiums and dignifying titles : She wonders, and inquires what this meant ? and whether lie was not a brute creature ? and how he came to be endowed with understanding and speech ? The serpent replies, that lie was nobler than a brute, and did indeed once want both these gifts ; but by eating a certain fruit in this garden, he had got both. She immediately asks what fruit and tree that was which had such a surprising influence and virtue. Which when he had shewed her; she replied, This no doubt is an excellent fruit, but God hath strictly forbidden us the use of it. To which the serpent presently replies, as in the close of ver. 1. `Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' The way how these words are introduced plainly spews that something had passed previous thereto. And some suppose, that the serpent, to confirm the truth of his assertion, pulled, off some of the fruits of the tree, ate one in her presence, and presented another to Eve, who, before eating it, had the discourse with the serpent recorded in the subsequent verses.

(4.) The devil's subtilty appears in accosting our first parents so early, before they were confirmed in their course of obedience. The holy angels in heaven are fully confirmed in righteousness and holiness ; they are called morning stars ; Job 38:7. and are all fixed, not wandering stars. But our first parents were not confirmed in their obedience, they were not yet fixed in their orb of holiness. Though they had a possibility of standing, yet they had not an impossibility of falling. They were holy but mutable. It was possible for them to change their state. Now, Satan's subtilty was eminently manifested here.

(5.) He first allures with the hope of impunity, and then he promises an universal knowledge of good and evil.

(1.) He persuades Eve, that though she did eat of the forbidden tree, yet she should not die, Genesis 3:4. `Ye shall not surely die.' `God indeed did say so for your terror, to keep you in awe. But do not entertain such hard and unworthy thoughts of that God who is infinitely good and gracious. Do not think that, for such a trifle as the eating of a little fruit, he will undo you and all your posterity for ever, and so suddenly destroy the most excellent piece of his own workmanship, wherein his image shines in a most resplendent manner.'

(2.) He promiseth them an universal knowledge, as the effect of eating this fruit, Genesis 3:5. "For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eves shall be opened : and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' ' God's design in that prohibition is only this : he knows that you shall be so far from dying, that thereby you shall certainly be entered into a new and more noble and excellent kind of life. The eyes of your understanding, which are now shit in a great measure as to the knowledge of many things, shall then be wide opened, and ye shall see more clearly and distinctly than now you do. You shall be as God, and shall attain to a hind of Omniscience.,

(6.) Satan's subtilty was manifested here, in assaulting Eve's faith. He would persuade her, that God had not spoken truth in that threatening. He managed the whole business with a lie ; yea, he adds one lie to another. 'Ye shall not surely die,' says he; and then he represents God as envying our first parents that great honour and happiness that was attainable by them, Genesis 3:5. and himself as one that wished their happiness, and would tell her flow to arrive at it; and alleges they might easily understand, by the very name of the tree, the truth of what he says to her. ' It is (says he) because God envies your felicity that he hath forbidden you the use of this tree. But know ye, if ye eat of it, ye shall he is gods.' here was subtilty indeed. The devil was first a liar, and then a murderer. This was Satan's master-piece, to weaken her faith : for when he had shaken that, and brought her once to distrust, then she was easily Overcome: and presently put forth her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit. By these pretences he ruined innocence itself': for the woman being deceived by these allectives, swallowed down the poison of the serpent; and having tasted death herself, she betook herself to her husband, and persuaded him by the same means to despise the law of their Creator.

Thus sin made its entrance into the world, and brought an universal confusion into it. For the moral harmony of the world consisting in the just subordination of the several mils of beings to one another, and of all to God, when man, who was placed next to him, broke the union, his fail brought a desperate disorder into God's government. And though the matter of the offence may seem small, yet the disobedience was infinitely great; it being the transgression of that command which was given to be the real proof of man's subjection to God. The honour and majesty of the whole law was violated in the breach of that symbolical precept. But this will fall to be more fully illustrated in a subsequent discourse.

Fourthly, Man being thus left to the freedom of his own will, abused his liberty in complying with the temptation, and freely apostatised from God. And so man himself, and he only, was the true and proper cause of his own sinning. Not God, for lie is unchangeably holy; not the devil, for lie could only tempt, not force therefore man himself only is to blame, Ecclesiastes 7:29. 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.'

I shall conclude this subject with a few inferences.

1. Hence see the great weakness, yea the nothingness of the creature when left to itself. When Adam was in the state of integrity, lie quickly made a defection from God, he soon lost the robe of his primitive innocence, and all the blessedness of paradise. If our nature was so weak when at the best, then how miserably weak is it now when it is at its worst ? If Adam did not stand when he was perfectly holy and righteous, how unable are we to stand when sin has entirely disabled us ? If purified nature could not resist the temptation, but was quite overturned at the first blast, how shall corrupt nature stand, when besieged and stormed with a long succession of strong and

violent assaults ? If Adam in a few hours sinned himself out of paradise, 0 how quickly would even those who are regenerated sin themselves into hell, if they were not preserved by a greater power than their own ; nay kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ?' God left some of the angels to themselves, and they turned devils ; and he left innocent Adam, and he fell into a gulf of misery. May we not then much more say, `Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall;' especially seeing we have a violent bent and strong propensity of heart and will to go away from God, which Adam had not.

2. There is no reason to blame God for the misery of the fall. He gave man sufficient power and ability to stand if he would, promised-a large reward to excite his obedience, and severely threatened disobedience : but man would needs try experiments to make his case better than God made it; and so fell by his own inventions. The fault then was his own, he alone was culpable, and lie was the author of his own ruin.

3. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. You see that you have to do with an impudent devil, who is still going about seeking whom he may devour. No state, while ye are in this world, can secure you from his temptations. Though ye be in a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, ye are not secure from his assaults. No place, though it were a paradise. can protect You. He has malice enough to push you on to the most atrocious sins ; subtilty and experience, acquired by hellish art in the course of some thousand years, to suit his baits so as they may best take with you. Do not parley with the tempter : listening to him may bring on doubting, and doubting may bring on the denial of God's truths, and so end in full compliance with his horrid temptations, as it did with our first mother.

4. If Adam fell so soon after he was created, and could not be his own keeper, then certainly he can much less be his own saviour. If lie could not preserve himself from falling into the gulf, much less can he pull himself out of it again. We are by nature without strength, and have no inclination to that which is good ; and therefore God must work powerfully and efficaciously in us. We cannot break the chains and knock off the fetters of sin and Satan, by which we are held. We can make no reparation to the honour of God for the wrongs and indignities we have done him. To Christ alone we must be indebted for all this. W e have destroyed ourselves, but in him is our help.

5. There is no justification by the works of the law. Adam broke the covenant of works, and so rendered it impracticable for him or his posterity to attain to life and happiness by it. For it is written, ' Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Galatians 3:10. ` As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.' The law requires a perfect spotless righteousness, but the best righteousness of fallen man is but filthy rags. It is not only torn and ragged, but polluted and defiled. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God : and there is no possibility of obtaining justification by the works of the law now ; ` for by the works of the law (says Paul) shall no flesh be justified.'

6. Lastly, See your absolute need of Christ ; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye can be saved. Go not about to establish a righteousness of your own, or to seek to get to heaven by any works of your own. That is indeed still the thing man aims at. First lie sins, and then, like Adam, sets to work to cover himself with a cover of his own making, to procure a title to eternal life by his own works. But is it easier to recover yourselves from the ruins of the fall, than to stand while yet in an innocent and upright state ? Have ye gathered strength by sinning, and are

ye able to walk to heaven on your own legs ? Come then to Christ, who by his obedience and death bath procured a righteousness which alone can stand yon in stead, and by which alone you call obtain a right to eternal life. You must then either come to Christ, or perish for ever.

S. Of the First Sin in Particular

OF THE FIRST SIN IN PARTICULAR.

Genesis 3:6-7.-And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she tools of the fruit thereof, and did cat, and gave also veto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. IN these words we are distinctly informed how the covenant of works was broken, and our first parents stripped of their primitive innocence and integrity. Eve seduced by the devil, first ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her example. The act being completed by both, they immediately discovered, to their shame and dishonour, the miserable state they were reduced to. The words sufficiently found the following doctrine.

DOCT. ’ Our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit.’

I have already shewn why the forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as also of what use it was in the covenant of works. It remains that we skew, I. How the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell.

II. Why this fruit was forbidden.

III. The aggravations of it.

IV, Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew how the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell. It is not to be thought, that they were wholly innocent till they had the forbidden fruit in their mouths ; for their coveting it in their hearts behoved of necessity to go before that ; but the eating of it was that whereby their sin and apostacy from their Creator was completed. The first step of their sin seems then to be doubting and unbelief of the threatening, Genesis 3:4, Genesis 3:6. Their faith as to the truth of the threatening being first foundered, their heart plied to the temptation; and then succeeded a lust after the forbidden fruit; and then the sin was completed by their actually eating it, as in the words of the text.

Satan, the old serpent, very artfully laid his train for enticing our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit. For be attacked the woman when alone, at a distance from her husband ; he endeavoured to make her doubt of the truth of the divine threatening; he presented the fatal object, as fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise: he pretended a higher regard for them than their sovereign Creator, who, he tacitly insinuated, grudged their happiness: and he used means to persuade them, that they should be like God, in the vast extent of their knowledge, upon their eating the delectable morsel. Thus the eyes of their mind were first blemished by a mist from hell ; which being admitted, gradually darkened their understanding, so that first doubting, and then disbelief of the threatening, ensued. Their will was easily conquered to a compliance with the

temptation; then a corrupt affection to the tree seized them, discovering itself in a lustful looking at it: then the hand took it, and the mouth ate it, and the fatal morsel was swallowed.

II. I am next to shew why this fruit was forbidden.

1. It was not because God grudged the happiness of our first parents, as the devil blasphemously alleged, whom the event proved a liar, John 8:44. Nor yet,

2. Because there was any evil in the fruit itself; for that could not be ; for we are told, Gen. i. ult. that, at the close of the creation every thing was very good. This fruit was not forbidden because it was evil, but it was evil because it was forbidden. It was forbidden for the trial of man's obedience. Not that God knew not what was in man, and what he would be, but to discover the creature's weakness to himself without God, and that he might thence take occasion of advancing his own glory impaired by the sin of man, in a more illustrious manner than if innocent Adam had continued in his primitive state. But it may be asked, Why did God make choice of this for the trial of man ? I answer, God did so most reasonably. For,

(1.) This being a thing in itself indifferent, was most meet for the trial of his obedience. For hereby his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, which would have been the plainest evidence of obedience. Had it been to love God or his neighbour, nature itself taught him to do so, and by the natural make of his soul he was inclined to this. What trial would that have been to a man newly created, and loaded with benefits from God, not to take another God, worship images, or take his name in vain, when he saw all to be God's creatures or servants ; to keep the sabbath, which was to return once a-week only? He had no father or mother to honour, none to kill but her that was his own flesh, none to commit adultery with, none to steal from, none to bear false witness against, none to covet their goods. Thus the prohibition of a thing in itself indifferent was a proper test, and the only proper test for the trial of man.

(2.) Thus man's obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous, being in an external thing whereof his very senses might he judge; which could not be in the internal acts of obedience.

(3.) This was most proper for asserting the sovereign dominion of God, who had set him down in a beautiful paradise, and made him lord of the world. Was it not very reasonable that God should keep one single tree from him, as a testimony of his holding God as his great Landlord?

(4.) This was most useful and necessary to man, as a memorandum of the state wherein he was created. For man was created with a free will to good, whereof the tree of life was an evidence but also to evil, whereof the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an evidence. So that in effect it was a continual watchword to him, and a beacon set up before him to beware of dashing on the rock of sin.

(5.) It was a great mercy to man, in that, beside the natural make of his soul, which was turned towards God as his chief happiness and end, he had this prohibition set to keep it in that posture. For as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hand, Exodus 17:12, so man had the fabric of his body looking upward, and this fair tree forbidden him, to teach him that his happiness lay not in the creatures, but in God. So that this tree being forbidden was a sign of emptiness hung before the creature's door, with that inscription, Here is not your rest ; the creature's hand pointing man away

from themselves to God, as the alone fountain of happiness.

(6.) Lastly, This was a compend of the whole law of God, wherein all was summarily comprehended, viz. love to God, and his neighbour, as will afterwards be made appear. lll. I come now to consider the evil of this first sin. Some may be ready to say, Was not the eating of the forbidden fruit a little sin? So it appears indeed in the sight of blind man, whose eye being put out with it, sees not the great majesty of God, and the horrid evil of the action. But indeed it was more horrible if ye consider, 1. The aggravations of it.

2. The nature of it.

3. The effects of it.

First, Let us view the aggravations of this first sin. Consider,

1. The person who did it. I may say it was not a sinner that sinned, but an innocent person, free from all inclination to evil ; one whom God made able to stand if he would, and endued with the image of God, without any mixture of sinful ignorance, perverseness of will, or irregularity of affections. No wonder to see a man with a poor stock soon broken: but that a man who had such a large stock should play the bankrupt, was horrid indeed.

2. What was the thing for which he broke the command. Achan had a wedge of gold to tempt him, and Judas thirty pieces of silver to entice his covetous disposition. But what was the enticing object in Adam's case ? The fruit of a tree : a small thing indeed : but the smaller the thing was, the more inexcusable the sinner, whom Satan could draw after him by so slender a thread. What need had he of that, when God had given him abundance of other fruit? But, with David, Adam spares his own flock, and takes his neighhour's one lamb.

3. The persons wronged by this sin. He sinned against God himself, to whom he owed the strictest obedience; against his soul and body, upon which he brought wrath and a curse ; against all his posterity, who were then in his loins, upon whom his sin has entailed a scene of evils, under which the human race will groan to the end of time. Never did one sin strike against so many at once.

4. The time of this transgression. Man was scarcely well come out of the hand of his Creator, till he lifted up his heel against him. He stood very short while, till lie turned giddy with ambition, and fell into disgrace. It is thought probable, he fell the same day he was created; and such an early revolt from his allegiance was a very high aggravation of his sin.

5. The place where the crime was committed. In paradise, where every plant and flower were proclaiming the glory of God, and where he wanted nothing that was necessary for him. In the presence-chamber, as it were, he struck at his Sovereign Lord and King. So his offence was aggravated like the murder of Zacharias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, Matthew 23:35.

Secondly, The nature of this sin. It was not one single sin, but a complication of all evils, a violation of the whole law of God, and a total apostacy from him in heart, lip, and life.* This was a sin whereby at one touch both the natural and positive law was trampled under foot ; yea, by which all the ten commandments were struck at, at once.

1. Did they not chuse new gods: when, by eating this fruit, they made their belly their god; self their god ; nay the devil their god, when they conspired with him against God, being filled with pride and ambition as he to be like God; when they believed the devil and mistrusted God, and shook off the yoke of his dominion, turning rebels to him, and being most unthankful for the divine goodness expressed towards them? Rebel-man set up a trinity, (1.) Of his belly, for sensuality. (2.) Of himself, by ambition; and, (3.) Of the devil, by believing him, and disbelieving his Creator.

2. Though man at first received, yet he did not observe that great ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. He contenmed that ordinance which God had most plainly appointed, and would needs carve out to himself how he would serve the Lord.

He took the name of the Lord his God in vain, despising his attributes, whereby he makes himself known, his justice, truth, power, &c. profaning God's ordinance, that sacramental tree ; abusing his word, by not giving credit to it ; and abusing his works, that creature which he should not have touched ; and violently misconstructing the work of providence, as if God, by that act of forbidding them that tree, had minded to keep them from happiness. And therefore though there was no man to punish them, God suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment.

4. He was so far from remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, that he put himself out of all case for serving God ere it came, by this means. He kept not that state of rest wherein God had placed him.

5. Adam honoured not his Father in heaven. Both our first parents minded not their relative duties. Eve forgets herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both ; and Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation too, and so confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. Therefore their clays were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. He was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this act he was a child-murderer, cutting the throats of all his posterity ; and he was a self-murderer too.

7. Our first parents were fain to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, which their luxury and sensuality had brought them too.

8. Adam committed theft ; and was but a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own, against the will of the great Owner. he was the Achan in the camp.

9. He bare false witness against the Lord, when he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was an avouching, that God's word was not to be believed, that the Lord dealt hardly and scrimptly with him, and grudged his happiness.

10. He was discontented with that happy state wherein God had placed him, he was not content with his lot, and therefore, like another king of Babylon, he coveted an evil covetousness to his house ; which ruined both himself and them.

Thirdly, Consider the effects of this first sin.

1. God was robbed of his glory, that he should have had from the creature's active obedience. He was made and well qualified for glorifying his Creator ; but breaking covenant with God, and falling

under the curse of the law, he was quite indisposed for that work. He could aim no more at this mark which God set before him.

2. God's image was defaced ; the fling of Heaven's picture was rent in pieces. What a huge offence would it be to come into a workman's shop, and with one touch dash in pieces a curious piece of work that he had made? Yet thus offensively did Adam behave, spurning at the image of God, and quite defacing it from his soul.

3. Adam and all his posterity were ruined by this fatal transgression. It opened the sluice to all that flood of miseries that has overspread the face of the earth. At this gate sin and death entered into the world, where they will reign till time shall be no more. God is just and holy ; and if the first sin had not deserved this punishment, it would not have been inflicted with such a mark of indignation.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Say not when ye are tempted, it is but a little sin and therefore ye may act it. Consider, that which in the commission is but as the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, when God comes to judgment, or conscience gets up, will cover the face of the heavens. Little do ye know what a small temptation may be big with. A man may drown in a little rivulet as well as in the deep sea.

2. Then God's will is a sufficient bar to hold us back from any thing if we would be safe. And therefore let us know, that where there is no more to be a hedge to us but the bare command of God, if we leap over it, a serpent will bite us. Ah! how few know what it is to be restrained by a bare command of God! Ah! the generality leap over the hedge of God's will and law, and live as if their were no restraint upon them from the God of heaven, who will severely punish all transgressions of his law.

3. Beware of the pleasure of your senses, and the pride of life. The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh ruined the world at first, and do so still. The devil shoots his darts by the eye into the soul, which is weaker now than it was in the primitive state, and more liable to deception. Therefore watch your eyes and ears. Have a care of sensuality. Eating ruined Adam and Eve ; and still ruins many, who eat not for God or his glory, but to satisfy their sensual appetite, as they did.

4. Lastly, 0 prize Christ, who to redeem lost man, did hang upon a tree, and drink the cup of wrath as the bitter fruits of sin, and was buried in a garden. The first Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and Christ hung on the cursed tree. Adam's preposterous love to his wife made him sin, and Christ's love to his spouse made him suffer. Our first parents pleased their sensual appetite with the taste of the pleasant fruit of the forbidden tree, and therefore Christ got vinegar mixed with gall to drink upon the cross-tree. Adam sinned in a garden, and in a garden was Christ buried. By eating the forbidden fruit, death came upon all men to condemnation ; and by eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, life is brought to the soul. 0 then, sinners, flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away ; and ye shall be reinstated in all that happiness and favour with God which he forfeited by eating the forbidden fruit.

*A more particular view of the ingredients in the first sin may be seen in that author's View of the Covenant o/' Works, p. 80, 81. published in 1772.

S. Of the Providence of God

OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Matthew 10:29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Our Lord is here encouraging his disciples against all the troubles and distresses they might meet with in their way, and particularly against the fear of men, by the consideration of the providence of God, which reaches unto the meanest of things, sparrows and the hairs of our head. Sparrows are of a mean price and small value; and yet, for as mean as they are, God preserves them, guides and disposes of all things concerning them, so that one of them cannot fall to the ground by shot or any other way, without his sovereign ordering and disposal. The instruction deducible from the text is, DOCT. "There is a providence that extends itself to the least of things. In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,.

I. Shew that there is a providence.

II. Consider its object.

III. Explain the acts thereof.

IV. Consider its properties.

V. Lastly,. make improvement.

I. I am to shew that there is a providence. This appears,

1. From plain scripture-testimonies; as Psalms 103:19. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Acts 17:28. "In him we live, and move, and have our being," Ephesians 1:11. --"Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Providence is also held forth by a threefold scripture-emblem. Chiefly, (1.) Mount Moriah, which upon occasion of the miraculous preservation of Isaac, and a ram to be put in his room in order to be sacrificed, was called JEHOVAH JIREH, i.e. The Lord will provide, Genesis 22:14. (3.) Ezekiel wheels, where there was a wheel in the middle of a wheel, denoting the agency of the first cause, and the superintending and directing providence of God, Ezekiel 1:1-28.

2. From the nature of God, who being independent, and the first cause of all things, the creatures must needs depend upon him in their being and working. He is the end of all things, wise, knowing how to manage all for the best; powerful to effectuate whatever he has purposed; and faithful to accomplish all he has decreed, promised, or threatened.

3. From the harmony and order of the most confused things in the world. Every thing appears to a discerning eye to be wisely ordered, notwithstanding the confusions that seem to take place. What would become of the world, if there were not a providence seeing men that despise all order, and would fain give loose reins to their lusts and unbridled inclinations, are always the greatest party. and would overpower and destroy the smaller and most virtuous party? Herein the truth of providence clearly appears. The extraordinary judgments that have pursued and been inflicted

upon wicked men, and the remarkable deliverances that have been granted to the church and people of God in all ages, do loudly proclaim a providence.

4. From the fulfilment of prophecies, which could not possibly be without a providence to bring them to pass.

II. Let us, in the next place, consider the object of providence, or that which it reacheth and extendeth to. And this is all the creatures, and all their actions, Hebrews 1:3. --"Upholding all things by the word of his power," Psalms 103:19. "His kingdom ruleth over all." The angels are subject to this providence, Nehemiah 9:6. "Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." So are also the devils, these infernal spirits, Matthew 8:31, "If thou cast us out (said they to Jesus), suffer us to go away unto the herd of swine." It reacheth natural things, as clouds, snow, winds, &c. as appears from Psalms 104:147. and from daily observation. Casual things are ordered by providence, as lots, Proverbs 16:33. "The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." So in the case of accidental manslaughter, Exodus 21:13. "If a man lie not in wait, and God deliver him into his hand." There is nothing so mean but providence extends to it, such as the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our head. It is God that feeds the fowls and the young ravens that cry. He clothes the lilies and grass of the field, that have no hand of man about them. He made lice, frogs, &c. a plague to scourge Pharaoh and his people, worms to eat up Herod, &c. In a special manner providence is conversant about man, forming him in the womb, "Hast thou not poured me out as milk (says Job), and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with flesh and hast fenced me with bones and sinews," Job 10:10-11. --bringing him forth out of his mother’s bowels, and holding him up thereafter, Psalms 71:6. His heart is in the Lord’s hand, and all his thoughts and inclinations are under his control, Proverbs 21:1. He directs and orders all his steps. The most free acts of the creature’s will are governed by superintending providence. All their good actions, John 15:5. "Without me ye can do nothing." So also their evil actions, Acts 4:27-28. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done," Genesis 45:7. "God sent me before you," says Joseph to his brethren, though they had wickedly sold him into Egypt.

III. I proceed to consider the acts of providence. They are two, preserving and governing the creatures and their actions.

1. God by his providence preserves all the creatures. This preservation of the creatures is an act of providence, whereby they are preserved in their being and power of acting, Job 1:3. "Upholding all things by the word of his power." In this God sometimes makes use of means, and sometimes acts without means. We have both described, Hosea 2:21-22. "I will hear saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel." He preserves the heavens immediately, the earth, the corn, the wine, and the oil, &c. mediately. And thus by this providence he provides all things necessary for the preservation of all things; Psalms 145:15-16. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thing hand, and satisfiest the desire of every

living thing." This act of providence is so necessary, that nothing could subsist one moment without it. For there is no necessary connexion betwixt the being of the creatures this moment and their being the next; and as they could not give themselves a being, so they cannot continue it, but must be upheld by God as a ball in the air, Hebrews 1:3. There is a continual efflux of providence necessary for preserving and upholding the creatures in their being, otherwise they would be independent, and could preserve themselves, which is grossly absurd.

2. God does not only preserve the creatures, but governs and manages them, which is the second act of providence; whereby he disposes of all things, persons, and actions, according to his will, Proverbs 21:1. "The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will, Proverbs 16:33. "The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Proverbs 16:9. "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." And this act of providence is also necessary: for as the creature cannot be or exist without God, so neither can it act without him, Acts 17:21. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." God does not make man as the carpenter doth the ship, which afterwards sails without him; but he rules and guides him, sitting at the helm, to direct and order all his motions: so that whatever men do, they do nothing without him: not only in their good actions, where he gives grace, and excites it, working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure: but also in their evil actions, wherein they are under the hand of Providence, but in a very different manner. For understanding this point, how the providence of God reacheth to and is concerned in sinful actions, we are to consider, that God neither puts evil into the hearts of men, not stirs them up to it: for, says the apostle, James 1:13. "God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man." And therefore he is not the author of sin. But,

1. God permits sin, when he does not hinder it, which he is not obliged to do. not that it falls our so as he cannot hinder it, for he is omnipotent, and can do all things; nor yet as if he cared not what fell out in the world; but he does wisely, for his holy ends, efficaciously will not to hinder it; Hence we read, Acts 14:16. that "God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." He does not permit sin, for that he will not violate or force the creature's free will; for God's providence offers no violence to the will of the creature; and if so, he should never hinder sin at all, for the same reason. But certainly he has holy ends in the permission of sin: for thereby his justice, mercy, wisdom, and love, in sending his Son to save sinners, do conspicuously appear, which otherwise would have been under an eternal cloud, hid from the view of men and angels. For further illustration of this doctrine relating to the concern of providence in sinful+ actions, we are to consider them in a twofold respect, as simple actions, or natural actions of the creature, abstract from any obliquity or deformity cleaving to them; and as actions having irregularity and pravity in them. Considered as natural actions of the creature, they are all effected by the providence of God, which co-operates with, and enables the creature to produce them, in such a manner that without the efflux of providence the creature could not move a hand or foot, or perform any action whatever; "for in him we move:" and no action of the creature simply considered, or as a natural action, can be sinful, but has a goodness of being in it, and is effected by the influence of providence. As to the pravity or sin that is in actions, as God decreed the futurition of sin, or permitted it to take place, and did not hinder it; so all the sin or vitiosity that is in actions proceeds entirely from the creature, and the evil lusts and passions that are in his heart.

Thus a man's taking up a stone, and throwing it, is a natural action, which the providence of God enable him to perform; but his throwing it at another man with an intention to kill him, is permitted by God, otherwise it could not take place; for if a hair cannot fall form our head without the providence of God, much less can a man be murdered without it: and the killing of the man by the throwing of the stone, proceeds entirely from the malice and wickedness that was in the heart of the murderer, the operation of which God did not hinder, which he is nowise obliged to do.

2. God leaves the sinner so far as he sees meet to the swing of his own lusts, and denies him restraining grace. Thus it is said of Hezekiah, a godly king, that, "in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart," 2 Chronicles 32:31. And when the restraint is taken off the sinner, he runs furiously, to evil.

3. God bounds sin, and restrains men in their sins, as he does the raging sea, allowing it to go so far, but no further. He has such a power and command over wicked men, that they are not masters of their own affections and dispositions, but many times act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved and proposed: as in the case of Laban. He pursued Jacob, when he left Padan-aram, in order to return into his own country, with a wicked intention to do him hurt, by robbing him of his wives, children, and cattle; but the Lord restrained him, and influenced him to enter into a covenant of friendship with the good patriarch, Genesis 32:1-32. Thus Esau had resolved on Jacob's death, and went out to meet him with a purpose to destroy him; but when providence brought them together, it is said," Esau embraced Jacob, and fell on his neck, and kiss him." Thus Balaam came with an express intention to curse Israel, and yet he fell a blessing them. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favour the Israelites, so that they sent them away with great riches, by lending them jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and costly garments. Thus, by a secret instinct, he turned Jehoshaphat's enemies away from him, when they came with a purpose to destroy him, 2 Chronicles 18:31; and at another time he turned his enemies against themselves, so that they sheathed their swords in one another's bowels, 2 Chronicles 20:1-37. Thus also he restrained the soldiers that broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with Christ, from not touching his, in order to accomplish his word, that a bone of the paschal lamb, which was a type of Christ, the Lamb of God, should not be broken. So true is that saying of the Psalmist, Psalms 76:10. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." God has a bridle in the mouths of wicked men, when they are under the most impetuous fury of their lusts, to turn them as he will, restraining and curbing in respect of some, and giving swing to others.

4. Lastly, God over-rules all to a good end. God has one end in wicked actions, and the sinner another. The sinner minds and intends evil, but God means and designs good by them all. So Joseph's brothers, in their cruelty selling him for a slave, meant evil to the poor youth; but God, in that dispensation meant it for good, and brought much good out of it to Joseph, and his father and brethren. Thus the Jews crucified Christ out of malice against him; but God by that crucifixion intended satisfaction to his justice for the sins of men, and the redemption and salvation of an elect world. Thus God brings good, the greatest good out of the worst of evils. What greater evil or more atrocious wickedness can be imagined, than the violent death of the innocent Son of God, who went about doing good, and was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners? and yet what a rich and astonishing good resulted therefrom, even glory to God, and peace and goodwill towards men!

IV. Our next business is to consider the properties of divine providence.

1. God’s providence is most holy, Psalms 145:7. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Even though providence reach to and be conversant in sinful actions, yet it is pure; as the sun contracts no defilement, though it shine on a dunghill. For God is neither the physical nor moral cause of the evil of any action, more than he who rides on a lame horse is the cause of his halting. All the evil that is in sinful actions proceeds and flows from the wicked agent, as the stench of the dunghill does not proceed from the heat of the sun, but from the corrupt matter contained in the dunghill.

2. It is most wise, Isaiah 28:29. "This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Infinite wisdom always proposes the most excellent ends in all its operations, and uses the best methods for accomplishing its ends. However perplexed confused, and void of wisdom providential administrations may appear to us poor mortals of narrow, shallow capacities, yet they are the result of the highest wisdom and the deepest counsel, as proceeding from and directed by him whose name is the only wise God, and cannot but manage all things with the greatest understanding. And the day will at last come when it shall be said by the untied voice of the whole assembly and church of the first-born, that God hath done all things well: and then the plan of providence will appear in every respect to have been most wise, harmonious and consistent.

3. Providence is most powerful. Hence the Lord says to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest," 2 Kings 19:28. "The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Who can resist his will which is almighty? He can never fail of his end, but all things fall out according to his decree, which is efficacious and irresistible.

I shall conclude with an use of exhortation.

1. Beware of drawing an excuse for your sin from the providence of God; for it is most holy, and has not the least efficiency in any sin you commit. Every sin is an act of rebellion against God; a breach of his holy law, and deserves his wrath and curse; and therefore cannot be authorised by an infinitely-holy God, who is of purer eyes that to behold iniquity without detestation and abhorrence. Though he has by a permissive decree allowed moral evil to be in the world, yet that has no influence on the sinner to commit it. For it is not the fulfilling of God’s decree, which is an absolute secret to every mortal, but he gratification of their own lusts and perverse inclinations, that men intend and mind in the commission of sin.

2. Beware of murmuring and fretting under any dispensations of providence that ye meet with; remembering that nothing falls out without a wise and holy providence, which knows best what is fit and proper for you. And in all cases, even amidst the most afflicting incidents that befall you, learn submission to the will of God; as Job did, when he said, in consequence of a train of the heaviest calamities that happened to him, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," Job 1:21. In the most distressing case say with the disciples, "The will of the Lord be done, Acts 21:14.

3. Beware of anxious cares and diffidence about your throughbearing in the world. This our Lord has cautioned his followers against, Matthew 6:31. "Take no thought (that is, anxious and

perplexing thought), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Never let the fear of man stop you from duty, Matthew 10:28-29.; but let your souls learn to trust in God, who guides and superintends all the events and administrations of providence, by whatever hands they are performed.

4. Do not slight means, seeing God worketh by them; and he that hath appointed the end orders the means necessary for gaining the end. Do not rely upon means, for they can do nothing without God, Matthew 4:4. Do not despond if there be no means, for God can work without them, as well as with them; Hosea 1:7. "I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." If the means be unlikely, he can work above them, Romans 4:19. "He considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb." If the means be contrary, he can work by contrary means, as he saved Jonah by the whale that devoured him. That fish swallowed up the prophet, but by the direction of providence, it vomited him out upon dry land.

5. Lastly, Happy is the people whose God the Lord is: for all things shall work together for their good. They may sit secure in exercising faith upon God, come what will. They have ground for prayer; for God is a prayer-hearing God, and will be inquired of by his people as to all their concerns in the world. And they have ground for the greatest encouragement and comfort amidst all the events of providence, seeing they are managed by their covenant God and gracious friend, who will never neglect or overlook his dear people, and whatever concerns them. For he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Hebrews 13:5.

S. Of the Unity of God

OF THE UNITY OF GOD.

Deuteronomy 6:4.--Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.

1 Corinthians 8:4.--We know that there is none other God but one.

COMPARE Jeremiah 10:10.--But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God.

WE have, in several preceding discourses, been endeavouring a little to explain the description of God that is given in our shorter Catechism, agreeable to the holy scriptures; and although it has been very imperfect, seeing it is but little of God we can know here; yet I hope what has been said upon it will tend to your instruction, and establishment in the faith, I now proceed to the next question, relating to the unity of God; which we have very clearly and strongly confirmed by the three passages of scripture which I have read. In the first of these texts there are two things which we are taught to believe concerning God. (1.) That he is JEHOVAH, a being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient. (2.) That he is the one only God. Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought that in this text there is a plain intimation of the Trinity of Persons in the unity of the Godhead; for here the name of God is thrice mentioned, and yet all declared to be but one. Happy they who have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one master to please, and but one benefactor to seek to. In the second text the unity of God is also clearly asserted: There is none other God but one. The third text presents us with a very amiable representation of God. (1.) As the true God. He is not a, counterfeit and a mere pretender to divinity, as idols are; but he is really what he has revealed himself to be. He is one upon whom me may depend, and in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. (2.) As the living God. He is life itself, has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless; but ours is the living God and hath immortality. From the three passages of scripture compared together, the following doctrine natively arises, viz.

DOCT. 'There is but one only, the living and true God.' In discoursing this point, I shall shew, I. Why God is called the living God.

II. Why he is called the true God.

III. That there is but one God.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew why God is called the living God.

1. He is called the living God, in opposition to, and to distinguish him from dead idols, Psalms 115:4-6. 1 Thessalonians 1:9. These were but dead and lifeless things, stocks and stones, silver and gold, which the heathen nations did worship, neglecting the God that made the heavens and the earth. In this respect these idols were viler than the matter of which they were made, as the tree when in the ground had some life, but they had none.

2. Because God is the fountain of life, having all life in himself, John 5:26, and giving life to all things else. All life is in him and from him. (1.) Natural life, Acts 17:28. 'For in him we live.' 1 Timothy 6:13. 'Who quickeneth all things.' (2.) Spiritual life, Ephesians 2:1. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' (3.) Eternal life, Colossians 3:4. 'Christ is our life.' His giving of these to the creatures proves that they are in him, though in a more eminent way; for nothing can give what it has not.

II. I proceed to shew why he is called the true God.

He is so called to distinguish him from all false or fictitious gods. Hence the apostle speak of the Thessalonians having turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God,' 1 Thessalonians 1:9. And says the prophet, Jeremiah 10:11. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from tire earth, and from under these heavens.' The heathens, besides their worship of dead idols, worshipped also living creatures, Deuteronomy 32:17. 'They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up.' They were only gods in their blinded opinion and foolish fancy, not in reality; no more than the picture of a man, mistaken for a man, is a true man.

There is a twofold truth. (1.) Of fidelity or faithfulness. Thus God is true, that is, faithful, as was before explained. But that is not the truth here meant. (2.) A truth of essence, whereby a thing really is, and does not exist in opinion only. Thus the greatest liar is a true man; that is, he is really a man. It is in this sense that truth is attributed to God here. And the meaning is, that there is a true God, and but one true God. That there is a true God, or that truly and really there is a God, may be clearly demonstrated against atheists, by the light of nature, seeing they refuse scripture-testimony.

1. The works of creation and providence declare that there is a God. The heavens, earth, sea, air, and all that in them is, evidently proclaim their Maker to be divine. Look to the heaven, and behold how it is adorned with sun, moon, and stars. How wisely are these heavenly bodies situated with respect to us! Were they nearer, they would scorch and burn up the earth; were they placed at a greater distance, the earth would be bound with perpetual frost, and so be quite barren. How regularly do these heavenly bodies move, making night and day, summer and winter, in so orderly a manner, that these revolutions have never once ceased ! If we consider the earth, we shall find it hangs as a ball or globe in the air, yet its foundation immoveable, though hung upon nothing. How is it adorned with trees, flowers, corns, &c. and all things necessary for the use of man and beast ! And what an instance of divine wisdom is it, that all things are not found in every place, that so commerce betwixt man and man may be advanced, and correspondence be established betwixt different and distant nations, in the reciprocal exchange of the commodities peculiar to each country ! Are there not in these the brightest traces of order and symmetry, that point out a God as the former and preserver of them all? But let us look to man, that abridgement of the world, where the prints of a Divine Being appear in the brightest colours. The composition of his body, and the powers of his soul, may convince you of the existence of a Deity. For who but a God could unite such different substances, an immaterial spirit with an earthly body? who could distinguish so many parts, assign to them their situation, form, and temperature, with an absolute fitness for those uses to which they serve ? Well may we say with the apostle, Acts 17:27-28. 'He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.' We may find him in the

activity of our hands, in the beauty of our eyes, and in the vivacity of our senses. And to look inward, who hath endued the soul with such distinct and admirable faculties; the understanding, which exercises an empire over all things, compounds the most disagreeing, and divides the most intimate, by the lowest effects ascends to the highest cause; the will, which with such vigour pursues that which we esteem amiable and good, and recoils with aversion from that which we judge paining and evil; the memory, which preserves fresh and lively images of those things which are committed to its charge ? Certainly then there is a God who made us. As these things have a being, it leads us to the being of a God: for these things cannot be eternal; for then their being would be a necessary being, and so not capable of alteration or destruction. If they had a beginning, they had it from another: then that must either have had it from itself, or another, and so on till we come to the first cause, which is God. For nothing can give itself a being, because so it should be and not be at one and the same time. And the order speaks out infinite wisdom that has so ruled and disposed all; or else it must be attributed to chance; which is far more absurd than to say that a most beautiful fabric was made by the fortuitous concourse of stones, timber, lime, &c. which is shocking to common sense.

2. Conscience tells men there is a God. It may be observed how it stirs up to duty, though the powers of the world would forbid it under the highest pains; it comforts a man after duty is performed, though he be persecuted for it. It condemns and stings a man for sin, even for secret sins unknown to any in the world, and that even where there is no hazard at all from that quarter. These are terrors that no art can pluck up, nor any force quell; and when men are going out of the world, are most lively and pungent, even when their judgment is most clear, and free from the clouds and the prejudices of passions. How could these things be, if there were not a God, who by an omnipotent hand has planted conscience in their bosoms, as his own vicegerent, that stings them when none sees them? Atheists may, with as much hope of success, attempt to pull the sun, moon, and stars out of heaven, as to eradicate these innate impressions of a, Supreme Divine Being.

3. The universal and perpetual consent of all nations in this matter, evinces that there is a God. That must needs be a natural truth, that in all ages, all nations, however different in all other things, have yet held that there is a God, so that they would rather worship any thing than not have some God. Go back to ancient times; ask your fathers and they will tell you, your forefathers and your most ancient ancestors, and they will declare unto you, both that there is a God, and what he did in their days, and in the old times before them. Nay, inquire of the nations round about you, Spain and Turkey, the barbarous Tartars. the wild Africans, and the ignorant Americans, and they will all with one mouth confess this undeniable truth, That there is a God. This is an universal dictate of nature, spread as far and wide as reason and mankind are on the face of the earth. Some were called atheists among the heathens, not because they owned no God, but because they disowned their false gods. And if their have been any speculative atheists, that is, such who have been at all times thoroughly persuaded that that there is no Supreme Divine Being, they have been still looked on its monsters of men, and prodigies in nature, which have been universally abhorred as pests of society, and enemies to mankind. But the truth is, whatever advances men may make towards atheism in their depraved judgments, yet it is absolutely impossible to get the notion of a, Deity rooted quite out of the soul. Let not the atheist (if such a creature can possibly exist in a human form) pretend, that this universal belief of a divine existence which has obtained

in the world, is the product of a successful political device, contrived by its crafty governors to keep it in awe and subjection to themselves. For as this is nothing but a cunning insinuation to support the worst of causes, so it is absolutely unaccountable how this device should be so prevalent as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise such an uncontrollable empire over them. Is it possible that a few crafty men should so impose upon all the world, and they should never be, and, for any thing can be seen, shall never be able to free themselves from the fraud?

4. Lastly, Will ye consider the multitude of miracles which have occurred in the world. If these wonders of nature which we call miracles be nothing else but a mere lie and forgery, how comes the world to be so generally imposed on? How comes not only the Jewish but the Christian religion to be confirmed and ratified in such a firm manner as they have been amongst men ? But if it be true that nature's bonds are sometimes broken, that the ordinary methods of things and actions are crossed, and turned quite another way; if ever the sun stood still, or the angels were seen on an embassy from heaven; if ever God appeared in a flaming bush, and talked with man from the clouds; if ever sin was punished with a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven; in a word, if ever diseases were cured by a touch, and the dead raised to life by prayer: I say, if all these things be true, then answer me, Who is so able and so bold thus to transgress all the laws and bands of nature ? Certainly it can be no other than God.

III. I come now to shew that there is but one God. There are gods many, and lords many, in title and the opinion of men; but there is only one true God, having no fellow or competitor. This great and important truth I shall endeavour to confirm, both from scripture and reason.

1. The scripture is very express and pointed on this head: Deuteronomy 6:4. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.' Isaiah 44:6. 'I am the first, and the last, and besides me there is no God.' Mark 12:32. 'There is one God, and there is none other but he.' Consult also the following passages, which clearly establish this article, viz. 1 Samuel 2:2.Psalms 18:31.Isaiah 46:9. 1 Corinthians 8:4,1 Corinthians 8:6.

2. This truth is clear from reason.

(1.) There can be but one First Cause, which hath its being of itself, and gave being to all other things, and on which all other beings depend, and that is God: for one such is sufficient for the production, preservation, and government of all things: and therefore more are superfluous, for there is no need of them at all. Certainly he that made the world can preserve, govern, and guide it, without the assistance of any other God; for if he needed any assistance, he were not God himself, an infinitely perfect and all-sufficient being. And whatever power, wisdom, or other requisite perfections can be imagined to be in many gods, for making, preserving, and governing the world, all these are in one infinitely perfect being. Therefore it is useless to feign many, seeing one is sufficient.

(2.) There can be but one infinite being, and therefore there is but one God. Two infinites imply a contradiction. Seeing God fills heaven and earth with his presence, and is infinite in all the perfections and excellencies of his nature, there can be no place for another infinite to subsist.

(3.) There can be but one Independent Being, and therefore but one God. [1.] There can be but one independent in being: for if there were more gods, either one of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and then that one would be the only God: or none of them would be the

cause and author of being to the rest, and so none of them would be God; because none of them would be independent, or the fountain of being to all.[2.] There can be but one independent in working. For if there were more independent beings, then in those things wherein they will and act freely, they might will and act contrary things, and so oppose and hinder one another: so that being equal in power, nothing would be done by either of them. Yea, though we should suppose a plurality of gods agreeing in all things, yet seeing their mutual consent and agreement would be necessary to every action, it plainly appears, that each of them would necessarily depend on the rest in his operations; and so none of them would be God, because not absolutely independent.

(4.) There can be but one Omnipotent. For if there were two omnipotent beings, then the one is able to do whatsoever he will, and yet the other is able to resist and hinder him. And if the one cannot hinder the other, then that other is not omnipotent. Again, we must conceive two such beings, either as agreeing, and so the one would be superfluous; or as disagreeing, and so all would be brought to confusion, or nothing would be done at all; for that which the one would do, the other would oppose and hinder; just like a ship with two pilots of equal power, where the one would be ever cross to the other; when the one would sail, the other would cast anchor. Here would be a continual confusion, and the ship must needs perish. The order and harmony of the world, the constant and uniform government of all things, is a plain argument, that there is but one only Omnipotent being that rules all.

(5.) The supposition of a plurality of gods is destructive to all true religion. For if there were more than one God, we would be obliged to worship and serve more than one. But this it is impossible for us to do; as will plainly appear, if ye consider what divine worship and service is. Religious worship and adoration must be performed with the whole man. This is what the divine eminence and excellency requires, that we love him with all our heart, soul and strength, and serve him with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies; and that our whole man, time, strength, and all we have, be entirely devoted to him alone. But this cannot be done to a plurality of gods. For in serving and worshipping a plurality, our hearts and strength, our time and talents, would be divided among them. To this purpose our Lord argues, Matthew 6:24. 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Mammon is thought to be an idol, which the heathens reckoned to be the god of money and riches. Now, says Christ, you cannot serve them both; if you would have the Lord for your God, and serve him, you must renounce mammon. We cannot serve two gods or masters: if but one require our whole time and strength, we cannot serve the other.

(6.) If there might be more gods than one, nothing would hinder why there might not be one, or two, or three millions of them. No argument can be brought for a plurality of gods, suppose two or three, but what a man might, by parity of reason, make use of for ever so many. Hence it is, that when men have once begun to fancy a plurality of gods, they have been endless in such fancies and imaginations. To this purpose is that charge against the Jews, who in this conformed themselves very much to the nations round about them, " According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah," Jeremiah 2:28. Varro reckons up three hundred gods whom the heathens worshipped, and Hesiod reckons about three thousand of them. Indeed, if we once begin to fancy more gods than one, where shall we make an end? So that the opinion or conception of a plurality of gods is most ridiculous and irrational. And this should be observed against those who pretend,

that the Father is the most high God, and that there is no most high God but one, yet that there is another true God, viz. Christ, who in very deed, as to them, is but a mere man; yet they pretend he is the true God. Christ is God, and the true and most high God. But, in opposition to them, consider that to be a man and to be a God are opposite, and cannot be said of one in respect of one nature, Jeremiah 31:3.Acts 14:15.Jeremiah 10:11.

I shall now shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. Woe to atheists, then, whether they be such in heart or life; for their case is dreadful and desperate: and they shall sooner or later feel the heaviest strokes of the vengeance of that God whom they impiously deny, whether in opinion or by works. To dissuade from this fearful wickedness, consider,

(1.) That atheism is most irrational. It is great folly; and therefore the Psalmist saith, Psalms 14:1. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' It is contrary to the stream of universal reason; contrary to the natural dictates of the atheist's own soul; and contrary to the testimony of every creature. The atheist hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in heaven and earth. Besides, it is most unreasonable for any man to hazard himself on this bottom in the denial of a God. May he not reason thus with himself, what if there be a God, for any thing that I know? then what a dreadful case will I be in when I find it so? If there be a God, and I fear and serve him, I gain a blessed and glorious eternity; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by believing that there is one. Now, ought not reasonable creatures to argue thus with themselves? What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him ! He will meet with fearful reproaches on God's part, and with dreadful terrors on his own: all that he gains is but a liberty to sin here, and a certainty to suffer for it hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

(2.) Atheism is most impious. What horrid impiety is it for men to deny their Creator a being, without whose goodness they could have had none themselves? Nay, every atheist is a Decide, a killer of God as much as in him lies. He aims at the destruction of his very being. The atheist says upon the matter, that God is unworthy of a being, and that it were well if the world were rid of him.

(3.) Atheism is of pernicious consequence both to others and to the atheist himself. To others: for [1.] It would root out the foundation of government, and demolish all order among men. The being of God is the great guard of the world: for it is the sense of a Deity, upon which all civil order in cities and kingdoms is founded. Without this, there is no tie upon the consciences of men to restrain them from the most attrocious impieties and villainies. A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion. There could be no traffic nor commerce, if all the sacred bonds of it in the consciences of men were thus snapped asunder by denying the existence of God.[2.] It is introductive of all evil into the world. If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made, when the measure and standard of them is removed? for all good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, and upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God. So that if the foundation be destroyed, the whole superstructure must needs tumble down. A man might be a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, and yet in a strict sense not be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a god to himself. Where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, and the flood gates of all impiety rush in upon mankind. The whole earth would be filled with violence,

and all flesh would corrupt their way. Again, atheism is pernicious to the atheist himself, who denys the being of God, or endeavours to erase all notions of the Deity out of his mind. What can he gain by this but a sordid pleasure, unworthy of a reasonable nature? And suppose there were no God, what can he lose but his fleshly lusts, by believing there is one? By believing and confessing a God, a man ventures no loss; but by denying him, he runs the most desperate hazard if there be one. For this exposes him to the most dreadful wrath and vengeance of God. If there be a hotter receptacle in hell than another, it will be reserved for the atheist, who strikes and fights against God's very being

(4.) Atheists are worse than heathens: for they worshipped many gods, but these worship none at all. They preserved some notion of God in the world, but these would banish him from both heaven and earth. They degraded him, but these would destroy him. Yea, they are worse than the very devils: for the devils are under the dread of this truth, That God is. It is said they 'believe and tremble,' James 2:19. It is impossible for them to be atheists in opinion; for they feel there is a God by that sense of his wrath that torments them. There may be atheists in the church, but there are none in hell. Thus atheism is a most dreadful evil, most carefully to be guarded against.

Inf. 2. Seeing there is one only the living and true God, we owe the most perfect and unlimited obedience to his will. We are to obey the will of his command with readiness and alacrity; and submit to the will of his providence with the utmost cheerfulness, without fretting or murmuring.

Inf.3. Is God one? then his children should live in unity, that they may be one as he is one. They should study to be one in judgment and opinion, one in affection, and one in practice. We should all live as the family of one God, carefully avoiding divisions, and whatever may tend to interrupt the communion of saints.

Inf. 4. Seeing God is one, he should be the centre of our affections, love, fear, delight, joy, &c. Deuteronomy 6:4-5. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.'

I shall conclude all with a few directions.

1. Beware of such opinions as tend to atheism, and aim at the undermining of this supreme truth, that God is. There are many opinions which have a woeful tendency this way. Such is that of denying the immortality of the soul. This is a stroke at a distance at the very being of God, who is the Supreme Spirit. There is an order among spirits; first, the souls of men, then angels, and then God. Now, these degrees of spirits are, as it were, a rail and fence about the sense we have of the being and majesty of God. And such as deny the immortality of the soul, strike at a distance at the eternity and existence of the Deity.

Another opinion is, that men of all religions shall be saved; so that it is no matter what religion a man be of, if he walk according to the principles of it, and be of a sober moral life. In these latter times some are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity betray their faith, and plead for the salvation of heathens, Turks, and infidels. But ye should remember, that, as there is but one God, and one heavenly Jerusalem, so there is but one faith, and one way by which men can come to the enjoyment of God there. Such libertine principles have a manifest tendency to shake people loose of all religion. To make many doors to heaven, as one says, is to widen the gates of hell.

Another opinion tending to atheism is, the denying of God's providence in the government of the world. Some make him an idle spectator of what is done here below, asserting that he is contented with his own blessedness and glory, and that whatever is without him is neither in his thoughts nor care. Many think that this world is but as a great clock or machine, which was set a-going at first by God, and afterwards left to its own motion. But if ye exempt any thing from the dominion of providence, then you will soon run into all manner of libertinism. If Satan and wicked men may do what they will, and God be only a looker-on, and not concerned with human affairs, then ye may worship the devil, lest he hurt you, and fear men though God be propitious to you.

2. Beware of indulging sin. When ye take a liberty to sin, and gratify your vile and sordid lusts, you will hate the law that forbids it; and this will lead you to a hatred of the Lawgiver; and hatred of God strikes against his very being. When once you allow yourselves an indulgence to sin, you will be apt to think, O that there were no God to punish me for my crimes ! and would gladly persuade yourselves that there is none; and will think it your only game to do what ye can to root out the notions of God in your own minds, for your own quiet, that so ye may wallow in sin without remorse.

3. Prize and study the holy scriptures, for they shew clearly that there is a God. There are more clear marks and characters of a Deity stamped upon the holy scriptures than upon all the works of nature. Therefore converse much with them. By this means was Junius converted from atheism. His father perceiving him to be so atheistical, caused lay a Bible in every room, so that in whatsoever room he entered, a Bible haunted him; and he fancied it upbraided him thus: 'Wilt thou not read me, atheist? wilt thou not read me?" Whereupon he read it: and was thereby converted. I say then, study the holy scriptures, and in doing so, learn to submit your reason to divine revelation. For some men, neglecting the scriptures, and going forth in the pride of their own understandings, have at last disputed themselves into flat atheism.

4. Study God in the creatures as well as in the scriptures. The creatures were all made to be heralds of the divine glory, and his glorious being and perfections appear evidently in them. Hence saith the Psalmist, Psalms 19:1- - Numbers 'The heavens declare the glory of God? and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world: in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.' The world is sometimes compared to a book, and sometimes to a preacher. The universe is like a great printed book, wherein God sets forth himself to our view; and the great diversity of creatures which are in it, are so many letters, out of which we may spell his name. And they all preach loudly unto us the glorious being and excellencies of God. And therefore the apostle tells us, Romans 1:20. 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.' In the book of the creatures God hath written a part of the excellency of his name; and you should learn to read God wherever he hath made himself legible to you.

5. Lastly, Ye who are yet sinners, lying in your natural state of sin and misery, come unto God in Christ, and receive him as your God by faith, and so ye will be preserved from atheism. And ye who are believers in Christ, be often viewing God in your own experiences of him. Have you not often found God in the strengthening, reviving, and refreshing influences of his grace upon your

souls? Have ye not had sweet manifestations of his love? Have you not had frequent refreshing tastes of his goodness, in pardoning your iniquities, hearing and answering your prayers, supplying your wants, and feasting your souls? The reviewing of such experiences will be a mighty preservative against atheism. Can you doubt of his being, when you have been so often revived, refreshed, and supported by him? The secret touches of God upon your hearts, and your inward converses with him, are to you a clearer evidence of the being of God, than all the works of nature.

S. Of the Work of Creation

OF THE WORK OF CREATION

Hebrews 11:3 --Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Having discoursed to you of the decrees of God, whereby he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, I come now to treat of the execution of these decrees. That question, "How doth God execute his decrees?" being only an introduction to what follows, it is needless to insist on it. Only you must know, that for God to execute his decrees, is to bring to pass what he has decreed. Now, what God from all eternity decreed is brought to pass in the works of creation and providence. Nothing falls out in either of these but what was decreed; nor does it fall out in any other way than as it was decreed. The decrees of God are as it were the scheme, draught and pattern of the house; and the works of creation and providence are the house, built in every point comformable to the draught. In the text we have an answer to that question, 'What is the work of creation?' Wherein, we may consider,

1. What we understand about it. (1.) The making of the world; it was framed, and had a beginning, not being from eternity. (2.) The author and efficient cause of it, God. (3.) What God made, the worlds; all things, heaven, earth, sea, air, &c. (4.) How they were were made, by the word of God, that word of power which spake all things, into being. Or it may denote Jesus Christ, who is called the word of God, and by whom God made the worlds. (5.) Whereof they were made. This is declared negatively, Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear, that is, not of pre-existent matter, but of nothing. By things that are seen may be understood visible corporeal thing; and if these were made of nothing, much more things that are not seen. But I rather understand it of all things which are seen to have a being; for that word relates to the eyes of the understanding, as well as of the body.

2. How we understand this creation of the world, through faith. Not that we can understand nothing of the creation by the light of nature; for the eternity of the world is contrary to reason as well as faith; but we have the full and certain knowledge of this work of creation in the particular circumstances of it, through faith assenting to divine revelation, and no other way. In speaking to this work of creation I shall shew, I. What we are to understand by creation.

II. That the world was made, or had a beginning.

III. Who made it.

IV. What God made.

V. Whereof all things were made.

VI. How they were made.

VII. In what space of time they were made.

VIII. For what end God made all things.

IX. In what case of condition he made them.

X. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I am to show what we are to understand by creation, or what it is to create.

1. It is not to be taken here in a large sense, as sometimes it is used in scripture, for any production of things wherein second causes have their instrumentality; as when it is said, Psalms 104:20. 'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.' Where the meaning is, thou sendest forth thy quickening power, which produceth life in the creatures from time to time: for the Psalmist speaks not here of the first creation, but of the continued and repeated production of living creatures, in which the divine power is the principal agent. But,

2. We are to take it strictly, for the production of things out of nothing, or the giving a being to things which had none before. And here you must know, that there is a twofold creation, one immediate, and the other mediate.

(1.) There is an immediate creation; as when things are brought forth out of pure nothing, where there was no pre-existent matter to work upon. Thus the heavens, the earth, the waters, and all the materials of inferior bodies, were made of nothing; and the souls of men are still produced from the womb of nothing by God's creative power, and infused into their bodies immediately by him, when they are fully organised to receive them.

(2.) There is a secondary and mediate creation, which is the making things of pre-existing matter, but of such as is naturally unfit and altogether indisposed for such productions, and which could never by any power of second causes be brought into such a form. Thus all beasts, cattle, and creeping things, and the body of man, were at first made of the earth, and the dust of the ground; and the body of the first woman was made of a rib taken out of the man. Now, this was a creation as well as the former; because, though there was matter here to work upon, yet it could never have been reduced into such a form without the efficacy of Almighty power. We have an account of both these in the history of the creation. It is said, Genesis 1:1 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;' i.e. he made that mighty mass of matter out of nothing, which was at first a rude and indigested lump; for the earth was without form, and the heavens without light. And then by that same omnipotent power he reduced it into that beautiful order and disposition wherein it now appears to our view.

II. I go on to shew that the world was made, that it had a beginning and was not eternal. This the scripture plainly testifies, Genesis 1:1. above quoted. And this reason itself teacheth : for whatsoever is eternal, the being of it is necessary, and it is subject to no alteration. But we see this is not the case with the world; for it is daily undergoing alterations.

III. I am next to shew who made the world, and gave it a beginning. That was God and he only, Genesis 1:1 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' This will evidently appear from the following particulars.

1. The world could not make itself; for this would imply a horrid contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing hath no existence, so it hath no operation. There must therefore be something of real existence, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if any thing made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a creature.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused rout of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in the bigness, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure ? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the peculiar glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, Isaiah 44:24 'I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' Isaiah 45:12. 'I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.' Isaiah 40:12-13. 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance " Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Job 9:8. 'Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.' These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed every thing of the kind that hath been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity.--By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shews himself to be the true God. Jeremiah 10:11-12. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' Psalms 96:5. 'All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.' Isaiah 37:19. 'Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.' None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united. This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in scripture as the Creator, 1 Corinthians 8:6.--'The Father, of whom are all things.' The same prerogative belongs to the Son, John 1:3. 'All things were made by him (the 'Word, the Son); and without him was not any

thing made that was made.' The same honour belongs to the Holy Ghost, as Job 26:13. 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.' Job 33:4. "The Spirit of God hath made me (says Elihu), and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator; and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit are excluded; but because, as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be conceived thus: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority: 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For 'the Father created all things by Jesus Christ,' Ephesians 3:9. And we are told, that 'all things were made by him,' John 3:3. This work in regard of disposition and ornament, doth peculiarly belong to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, Genesis 1:2. 'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. Thus it is also said, Job 26:13. above cited, 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.'

IV. Our next province is to shew what God made. All things whatsoever, besides God, were created, Revelation 4:11. 'Thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Colossians 1:16. 'By him were all things created.' The evil of sin is no positive being, it being but a defect or want, and therefore is not reckoned among the things which God made, but owes its existence to the will of fallen angels and men. Devils being angels, are God's creatures; but God did not make them evil, or devils, but they made themselves so. Those things that were made in the beginning were most properly created of God; but whatsoever is or will be produced in the world, is still made by God, not only in respect that the matter whereof they are made was created by him, but because he is the first cause of all things, without whom second causes could produce nothing; and whatever power one creature has of producing another, is from God. Hence Elihu says, as above cited, 'The Spirit of God hath made me;' though he was produced by the operation of second causes. And it is worth while to consider what David says on this head, Psalms 119:13,- - Nehemiah This clearly appears from the impotency of the creature to produce any thing according to nature, when God denies his concurrence. Hence we have a chain of causes described, Hosea 2:21, Hosea 2:22. where God is the first cause, and acts the same part in all other operations wherein creatures are concerned: 'I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel. If it be asked, then, what did God make? I answer, he made every thing that has a being, this stately structure of the universe, and that vast variety of creatures that are in it, sin only excepted, which he permitted should take place, but had no hand in the effecting of it as such.

V. I proceed to shew of what all things were made. Of nothing; which does not denote any matter of which they were formed, but the term from which God brought them; when they had no being he gave them one. There was no pre-existent matter to make them of, nothing at all to work upon: for he made all things both visible and invisible,' Colossians 1:6. Romans 11:36. If then he made all things, be must needs have made them of nothing, unless he would say there was, besides God,

something before there was any thing, which is a palpable contradiction. To create is properly to make a thing of nothing, to make a thing have an existence that had none before. Thus were the heavens and the earth made of nothing simply; that is, they began to exist, which they never did before. This is what is called immediate creation, as I shewed on the first head. But there is a mediate creation, as I also noticed, which is a producing of things from matter altogether unfit for the work, and which could never be disposed, but by an almighty power to be such a, thing. Thus man's body was created of the dust, and this itself was created of nothing, and was utterly unfit for producing such a work without a superior agency.

VI. The sixth head is to shew, how all things were made of no thing. By the word of God's power. It was the infinite power of God that gave them a being; which power was exerted in his word, not a word properly spoken, but an act of his will commanding them to be, Genesis 1:3. God said, 'Let there be light and there was light,' Psalms 33:6, Psalms 33:9, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' By his powerful word he called them from nothing to being, Romans 4:17. " God calleth those things which be not as though they were." This is a notable evidence of infinite power which with so great easiness as the speaking of a word, could raise up this glorious fabric of the world. An heathen philosopher considered this as a striking instance of the sublime, peculiar to the books of the Jewish legislator.

VII. Our next business is to shew in what space of time the world was created. It was not done in a moment, but in the space of six days, as is clear from the narrative of Moses. It was as easy for God to have done it in one moment as in six days. But this method he took, that we might have that wisdom, goodness, and power that appeared in the work, distinctly before our eyes, and be stirred up to a particular and distinct consideration of these works, for commemoration of which a seventh day is appointed a sabbath of rest. But although God did not make all things in one moment, yet we are to believe, that every particular work was done in a moment, seeing it was done by a word, or an act of the divine will, Psalms 33:9. forecited. No sooner was the divine will intimated, than the thing willed instantly took place. In the space of these six days the angels were created; and it is not to be thought that they were brought into being before that period; for the scripture expressly asserts, that all things were created in that space, Exodus 20:11. And though Moses, 'Genesis 1:1-31. makes no express mention of the angels, yet, Genesis 2:1. he shews that they were created in one of these six days, as he mentions the host of the heavens and the earth; and it is certain, that in the host of heaven the angels are included, 1 Kings 22:19. where Micaiah the prophet says, 'I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (which can be no other than the angels) standing by him.' The works of the first day were, (1.) The highest heaven, the seat of the blessed, and that with the angels its inhabitants, who in Job 38:4-7. under the designation of 'morning stars and sons of God,' are said to have 'sang together, and shouted for joy,' when the foundations of the earth were laid, as being then made. (2.) The earth, that is, the mass of earth and water, which Moses says was without form and void; that is, without that beauty and order which it afterwards received, and destitute of inhabitants, and without furniture and use. (3.) The light, which was afterwards gathered together, and distributed into the body of the sun and stars. The works of the second day were the firmament; that is, that expansion or vast space which extends itself from the surface of the earth to the utmost extremity of the visible heavens, which ver. 8. is called heaven, that is, the aerial heavens, the habitation of birds and fowls, through which they wing their way. This vast extension is called the firmament, because it is fixed in its

proper place, without which it cannot be removed without force and violence. Another work of this day was the dividing of the waters above the firmament, that is, the clouds, from the waters as yet mixed with the earth, which were afterwards gathered together into seas, rivers, lakes, fountains, &c. On the third day, the lower waters were gathered into certain hollow places, which formed the sea; and the dryland appeared, adorned with plants, trees, and herbs, which continue to be produced to this day. On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were made, to enlighten the world, and render it a beautiful place, which otherwise would have been an uncomfortable dungeon, and to distinguish the four seasons of the year. On the fifth day, the fishes and fowls were made. On the sixth day, all sorts of beasts, tame and wild, and creeping things were produced out of the earth; and last of all, man, male and female.

It is probable that the world was created in autumn, that season of the year in which generally things are brought to perfection for the use of man and beast. But this not being an article of faith, we need not insist upon it.

VIII. I come now to shew for what end God made all things. It was for his own glory, Proverbs 16:4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Romans 11:36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' And there are these three attributes of God that especially shine forth in this work of creation, namely, his wisdom, power, and goodness.

1. His wisdom eminently appears, (1.) In that after the heavens and their inhabitants were created, those things that have only being and not life, then those that have being and life, but not sense, then those that have being, life, and sense, but not reason, and last of all, man, having being, life, sense, and reason, were successively formed. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' (2.) In his appointing of every thing to its proper use, by the law of creation, Genesis 1:1-31 Hence the wisdom of God is celebrated in that work, Jeremiah 10:12. 'He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.'

2. The power of God appeared, (1.) In creating all things by a word, which instantly produced the effect intended. (2.) In that he created plants, herbs, and trees, before the sun, moon, and stars, which now naturally are the causes of the earth's producing its fruits; as also light before them, for discovering their beauty and verdure.

3. His goodness appears, in that he first prepared the place before he brought in the inhabitants, first provided the food before the living creatures were made, and adorned and fitted all for the use of man, before he formed him.

IX. If it is asked, 'In what state were all things made? I answer, They were all 'very good,' Genesis 1:31. The goodness of the creature consists in its fitness for the use for which it was made. In this respect every thing answered exactly the end of its creation. Again, the goodness of things is their perfection; and so everything was made agreeable to the idea thereof that was formed in the divine mind. There was not the least blemish or defect in the work; but everything was beautiful, as it was the effect of infinite wisdom as well as almighty power. And God being the end of all, even natural things tend to him. (1.) Declaring his glory in an objective way, Psalms 19:1. (2.) Stirring us up to seek him, and behold him as our chief good and portion, Acts 17:26-27. Romans 1:20. (3.) Sustaining our life, and serving man, that he might serve God, for which he was made very fit, in

regard of the rich endowments of his mind, all pure, holy, and upright, 1 Corinthians 10:31. All the sin and misery that is now in the world, by which its beauty is greatly marred, its goodness defaced, and disorder and irregularity so universally prevail, proceeded from Satan, and man's yielding to his temptations.

I shall shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. God is a most glorious being, infinitely lovely and desirable, possessed of every perfection and excellency. He made all things, and bestowed upon them all the perfections and amiable qualities with which they are invested. So that there is no perfection in any of the creatures which is not in him in an eminent way, Psalms 94:9. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Whatever excellency and beauty is in the creatures, is all from him; and sure it must be most excellent in the fountain.

2. God's glory should be our chief end. And seeing whatever we have is from him, it should be used and employed for him: For 'all things were created by him and for him,' Colossians 1:16. Have we a tongue? It should be employed for him, to shew forth his praise; hands? they should do and work for him; life? it should be employed in his service; talents and abilities? they should be laid out for promoting his interest and honour; and, upon a proper call, we should be ready to suffer for him.

3. God is our Sovereign Lord Proprietor, and may do in us, on us, and by us, what he will: Romans 9:20-21. 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?' There is no reason to murmur and fret under the cross, or any afflicting dispensations, that he exercises us with. Should he destroy that being that he gave us, to whom would he do wrong? As he gave it us freely, he may take it away, without any impeachment of his goodness and justice. May not God do with his own what he will?

4. We should use all the creatures we make use of with an eye to God, and due thankfulness to him, the giver; employing them for our use, and in our service, soberly and wisely, with hearts full of gratitude to our Divine Benefactor; considering they stand related to God as their Creator, and are the workmanship of his own hands. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Timothy 4:4. They are not to be used to his dishonour, or the feeding of our base lusts and irregular appetites, but to fit us for and strengthen us in the performance of our duty to him.

There is no case so desperate, but faith may get sure footing with respect to it in the power and word of God. Let the people of God be ever so low, they can never be lower than when they were not at all. Hence the Lord says, Isaiah 65:18. 'Be glad and rejoice,' &c. He spoke a word and so the creature was made at first; and it will cost him but a word to make it over again. Hence Christ is called 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Revelation 3:14. O seek to be new-made by him; that old things may pass away, and all things become new.

6. Give away yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, making an hearty, a cheerful, and an entire dedication and surrender of your souls and bodies, and all that ye are and have, to him as your God and Father, resolving to serve and obey him all the days of your life: that as he made you for his glory, you may in some measure answer the end of your creation, which is to shew forth his

praise. Serve not sin or Satan any longer. God made you upright and holy; but Satan unmade you, stripping you of your highest glory and ornament. Relinquish his service, which is the basest drudgery and slavery, and will land all that are employed in it in hell at last: and engage in the service of God in Christ, which is truly honourable and glorious, and will be crowned with an everlasting reward in the other world: for where he is, there shall his servants also be.

7. Lastly, This doctrine affords a ground of love, peace, justice and mercy betwixt men, which should be carefully cultivated by all that would desire to be with God for ever. For says the prophet, Malachi 2:10. 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?' The consideration of being created by God, should be a powerful inducement to us to practise all the duties we owe to one another as men and Christians.

S. Praying in the Name of Christ

Praying in the Name of Christ by Thomas Boston

1. Negatively. It is not a bare faithless mentioning of his name in our prayers, nor finishing our prayers with them, Matthew 7:21. The saints use the words, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Corinthians 15:57, but often is that scabbard produced, while the sword of the Spirit is not in it. The words are said, but the faith is not exercised.

Praying at His Command 2. Positively. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray, first, At his command, to go to God by his order, John 16:24, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive." Christ as God commands all men to pray, to offer that piece of natural duty to God; but that is not the command meant. But Christ as Mediator sends his own to his Father to ask supply of their wants, and allows them to tell that he sent them, as one recommends a poor body to a friend, John 16:24, just cited. So to pray in the name of Christ is to go to God as sent by the poor man’s friend. So it implies,

1. The soul’s having come to Christ in the first place, John 15:7, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." He that would pray aright, must do as those who made Blastus the king’s chamberlain their friend first, and then made their plea to their king, Acts 12:20.

2. The soul’s taking its encouragement to pray from Jesus Christ, Hebrews 4:14, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." The way to the throne in heaven is blocked up by our sins. And sinners have no confidence to seek the Lord. Jesus Christ came down from heaven, died for the criminals, and gathers them to himself by effectual calling. He, as having all interest with his Father, bids them go to his Father in his name, and ask what they need, assuring them of acceptance. And from thence they take their encouragement, viz. from his promises in the word. And he gives them his token with them, which the Father will own, and that is his own Spirit, Romans 8:26-27, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Praying to God through Christ

Secondly, It is to direct our prayers to God through Jesus Christ, Hebrews 7:25, "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them," and in Hebrews 13:15, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

Praying Christ’s name is depending wholly on Christ’s merit and intercession for access, acceptance, and a gracious return:

1. Depending on Christ for access to God, Ephesians 3:12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." There is no access to God but through him, John 14:6 "No one comes to the Father except through Me." They that attempt otherwise to come to God, will get the door thrown in their face. But we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his side, who is the Secretary of heaven.

2. Depending on him for acceptance of our prayers, Ephesians 1:6 "He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift. If one lay the stress of the acceptance of his prayers on his attitude, feelings, tenderness, and so on, the prayer will not be accepted. A crucified Christ only can bear the weight of the acceptance of either our persons or performances.

3. Depending on him for a gracious answer, 1 John 5:14, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." No prayers are heard and answered but for the Mediator’s sake; and whatever petitions agreeable to God’s will are put up to God, in this dependence, are heard.

Why Must We Pray in the Name of Christ? The reason of this may be taken up in these two things

1. There is no access for a sinful creature to God without a Mediator, Isaiah 59:2, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear." John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Sin has set us at a distance from God, and has bolted the door of our access to him, that it is beyond our power, or that of any creature, to open it for us. His justice rejects the criminal, his holiness the unclean creature, unless there be an acceptable person to go between him and us. Our God is a consuming fire: and so there is no immediate access for a sinner to him.

2. And there is none appointed nor fit for that work but Christ, 1 Timothy 2:5. It is he alone who is our great High Priest. None but he has satisfied justice for our sins. And as he is the only Mediator of redemption, so he is the only Mediator of intercession, 1 John 2:1 "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The sweet savour of his merit alone is capable to procure acceptance to our prayers, in themselves unworthy, Revelation 8:3-4.

Chapter 118

S. Reason not the Supreme Judge of Controversies in Religion

Reason not the Supreme Judge of Controversies in Religion by Thomas Boston

1 Reason in an unregenerate man is blind in the matters of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they,are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' Ephesians 4:17-18; Ephesians 5:8. Except. This only respects reason not illustrated by divine revelation. Ans. By that illustration of reason by divine revelation, they understand either subjective or objective illustration. If they understand it of subjective illustration, they quit that article of their religion, wherein they believe that the mind of man is capable of itself, without the illumination of the Spirit, to attain sufficient knowledge of the mind of God revealed in the scripture. If of Objective illustration, by the mere revelation of these truths, then it is false that they assert: For the apostle opposes here the natural man to the spiritual man; and therefore by the natural man is understood every unregenerate man, even that has these truths revealed to him; for, says the apostle, 'they are foolishness unto him.' Now, how can he judge them foolishness if they be not revealed?

2. Reason is not infallible, and therefore cannot be admitted judge in matters concerning our souls. Reason may be deceived, Romans 3:4, and is not this to shake the foundations of religion, and to pave a way to scepticism and atheism? Except. That is not to be feared where sound reason is admitted judge. But what talk they of sound reason? The adversaries themselves will yield, that reason is unsound in the Most part of men. We say, that it is not fully sound in the world; for even the best know but in part; darkness remains in some measure on the minds of all men.

3. Reason must be subject to the scripture, and submit itself to be judged by God speaking there, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. 'The weapons of our warfare are....mighty....to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations....and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Matters of faith are above the sphere of reason; and therefore as sense is not admitted judge in those things that are above it, so neither reason in those things that are above it, 1 Timothy 3:16. 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.'

4. If reason were the supreme judge of controversies, then our faith should be built on ourselves, and the great reason why we believe any principle of religion would be, because it appears so and so to us, which is most absurd. The scripture teaches otherwise, 1 Thessalonians 2:13. 'Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God.' Most plainly does our Lord teach this, John 5:34. 'receive not testimony from men;' John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' The orthodox assert the supreme judge of controversies in religion to be the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures. This is proved by the following arguments.

1. In the Old and New Testament, the Lord still sends us to this judge. So that we may neither turn to the right hand nor left from what he there speaks, Deuteronomy 5:32. and Deuteronomy 17:11.

’According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee;’ Isaiah 8:20. To the law and to the testimony,’ &c.; Luke 16:29. ’They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;’ John 5:39. ’Search the scriptures.’ Some hereto refer that passage, Matthew 19:28. ’Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ In this sense it must be meant of the doctrine they taught, as dictated to them by the Holy Ghost.

2. It was the practice of Christ and his apostles to appeal to the Spirit speaking in the scriptures, Matthew 4:1-25:where Christ still answers Satan with that, ’It is written.’ And so while discoursing with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Matthew 22:31-32. So also in John 5:1-47 and John 10:1-42 and Luke 24:44. And so did others, Acts 17:11, and Acts 26:22-23.; 2 Peter 1:19.; Acts 15:15-16. A careful examination of which passages I recommend to you for your establishment in the truth.

3. To the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, and to him only, agree those things that are requisite to constitute, one the supreme judge. (1.) We may certainly know that the sentence which fie pronounces is true, for he is infallible, being God. (2.) We cannot appeal from him, for he is one above whom there is none. (3.) He is no respecter of persons, nor can be biassed in favour of one in preference to another.

S. Search from the Book of the Lord

Search from the Book of the Lord by Thomas Boston Several things are implied in Isaiah 34:16, "Search from the book of the Lord, and read:"

1. That man has lost his way, and needs direction to find it, Psalms 119:176, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant." Miserable man has blurred vision in a directionless world, which is a dark place, and has as much need of the scriptures to guide him, as one has of a light in darkness, 2 Peter 1:19. What a miserable case is that part of the world in that lacks the Bible? They are vain in their imaginations, and grope in the dark, but cannot find the way of salvation. In no better case are those to whom it has not come in power.

2. That man is in danger of being led farther and farther wrong. This made the spouse say, "Tell me, O you whom I love, Where you feed your flock, Where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself By the flocks of your companions?" Song of Solomon 1:7. There is a cunning devil, a wicked world, corrupt lusts within one’s own breast, to lead him out of the right way, that we had need to let go of, and take this guide. There are many false lights in the world, which, if followed, will lead the traveller into a mire, and leave him there.

3. That men are slow of heart to understand the mind of God in his word. It will cost searching diligently before we can take it up, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me," John 5:39. Our eyes are dim to the things of God, our understanding dull, and our judgment is weak. And therefore, because the iron is blunt, we must put too the more strength. We lost the sharpness of our sight in spiritual things in Adam; and our corrupt wills and carnal affections, that favour not the things of God, do blind our judgments even more: and therefore it is a labour to us to find out what is necessary for our salvation.

4. That the book of the Lord has its difficulties, which are not to be easily solved. Therefore the Psalmist prays, "Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law," Psalms 119:18.

Philip asked the eunuch, "Do you understand what you are reading?" and he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" There are depths there in which an elephant may swim, and will exercise the largest capabilities, with all the expertise they may be possessed of. God in his holy providence has so ordered it, to stain the pride of all glory; to make his word the more like himself, whom none can search out to perfection, and to sharpen the diligence of his people in their inquiries into it.

5. That yet we need highly to understand it, otherwise we would not be commanded to search into it. "Of the times and seasons," says the apostle, "you have no need that I write to you;" and therefore he wrote not of them. There is a treasure in this field; we are called to dig for it; for though it be hid, yet we must have it, or we will waste away in our spiritual poverty.

6. That we may gain from it by diligent inquiry. The holy humble heart will not be always sent empty away from these wells of salvation, when it undertakes itself to draw. There are shallow places in these waters of the sanctuary, where lambs may wade.

S. The Divine Authority of the Scripture

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 Timothy 3:16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness. THE next head which falls to be touched is the holy scripture, the rule which God has given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. We are poor blind creatures, that know not our way, neither how we should glorify God, nor how we may come to the enjoyment of him. Therefore God hath given us the revelation of his mind in that great point. The connection between this and the preceding question is abundantly obvious; the one points out the end for which we were made, the other the rule to direct us how to attain to that end. And in this text we have two things.

1. The divine authority of the scriptures asserted. All scripture is given by is given by inspiration of God. The word scripture signifies writing in general; but here it is appropriated to the holy scripture. It principally here aims at the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were written by men of a prophetic spirit: but seeing the New Testament was written by such as mere endowed with the same Spirit for writing, upon that reason, what is applied to the Old belongs also to the New Testament. It is said to be of divine inspiration, because the writers were inspired by the Spirit, who guided their hearts and pens; he dictated, and they wrote; so that it is his word and not theirs; and that is extended to the whole scriptures.

2. The use and end of the scriptures: It is profitable for doctrine, &c. If ye desire to know the truths of religion, or what we believe, the scripture is profitable for doctrine, teaching us what we are to believe concerning God, Christ, and ourselves, and the great things that concern salvation. If ye want to refute the contrary errors, it is profitable for reproof to convince us of the nature and importance of divine truth and point out what errors we are to avoid. If ye desire to amend your life and practice, casting off sinful practices, it is profitable for correction, that is, for reformation of manners. If ye want to know what is duty, and what is sin, it is necessary for instruction and righteousness ; showing us how to lead a holy and righteous life before God and instructing us in the true righteousness, which is the foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him, the righteousness of Christ. And what more is necessary for salvation for faith and obedience, for the whole of salvation ?

Two doctrines offer themselves from the words, viz.

Doct. I. 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

Doct. II. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.' I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

Doct. I. "The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.' Here I shall shew, I. What is meant by the Old and New Testament.

II. What are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

III. The necessity of the scriptures.

IV. That the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.

V. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew what is meant by the Old and New Testament. It is the covenant of grace which is called a testament and it is properly a testamentary covenant, without any proper conditions as to us, Hebrews 8:10. " This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. " Christ is the testator; He made the testament, and confirmed it with his death. The spirit of Christ drew the testament, dictating it to the holy penman. This testament of Christ's is one and the same as to substance, though sometimes more clearly revealed than at other times. The Old Testament is the more obscure draught of Christ's will, and the New Testament is the more clear one. Thus they only differ in circumstances, while the substantials of both are one and the same; one Mediator and testator, one legacy or promise of remission of sin and eternal life, and one faith as the way of obtaining it".

II. I proceed to shew what are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The scriptures of the Old Testament are those which begin with Genesis, and end with Malachi; and the scriptures of the New Testament are those which begin with Matthew, and end with the Revelation. And it is worthy of our special remark, how the Old Testament and the New, like the cherubims in the most holy place, stretch forth their wings touching one another; the Old Testament ending with the prophecy of sending Christ and John the Baptist Malachi 4:1-6, and the New beginning with the history of the coming of these two. The books of the Old Testament were divided by the Hebrews into three, the law, the Prophets, and Ketubim, written books. The law contains the five books of Moses, the Prophets are twofold, former and latter. The former are the historical books of the Old Testament, as Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1:1-22 and 2 Samuel 1:1-27 and 2 Kings; and they were so called, because they told things already done. The latter related things before they were done; and are of two sorts; the greater, which are three, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the lesser twelve, viz. Hosea, Joel, &c. The written books were called so, because they were written by such as had the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Hebrews speak, but not of prophecy. And of that sort are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. The Hebrews ascribe this division of them to Ezra; and it seems our Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged the same, while he tells his disciples, Luke 24:44. of the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. The books of the New Testament are divided into three sorts, Histories, the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation, which is prophetic. The books of both the Testaments were written by different authors. As to the Old Testament, Moses wrote the Pentateuch; only some verses in the end of Deuteronomy, where Moses' death is recorded, could not be written by him, but are said to have been written by Joshua; who also wrote the book that bears his name; or, according to the opinion of some, it was written by Eleazar, Aaron's son. Samuel is supposed to have written the book of Judges, and, it would appear, the last part of the book of Joshua, containing the account of the death of Joshua and Eleazar : Some think that the Judges did write every one the history of their own time; and that Samuel at last did put them all into one volume. The book of Ruth also was written by him, as the Hebrews tell. He wrote also the first book bearing his name, to 1 Samuel 25:1-44, where his death is narrated. The rest of the

chapters of that book, and the whole of the second book, are said to have been written by David. The books of the Kings are supposed to be written by David and Solomon, and other prophets that lived in these times; so that each of them did write what was done in his own time. Job is supposed to have written the book that bears his name. David wrote the Psalms, but not all: such as are not his have the author's name prefixed; as Asaph, Heman, &c.: and they were all by Ezra collected into one volume. Ezra is said to have written the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; Mordecai, that of Esther; and Solomon, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, wrote every one their own prophecies, containing a short their sermons. As for the books of the New Testament, without controversy the evangelist wrote the Gospels, according as their names are prefixed to them. Luke wrote the acts of the Apostles; and the remaining books, the Epistles and the Revelation, were written by those whose names they bear. Only as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, there has been some doubt, some ascribing it to Luke, some to Barnabas, others to Apollos, and others to Clemens: but, many learned men have given good reasons to prove it to be written by the apostle Paul. But the principal author is the Holy Spirit, whence the scripture is called the Word of God. The penmen were but the instruments in the hand of God in writing the same. It was the Spirit that dictated them, that inspired the writers, and guided them. But the inspiration was not the same in all points to all the penmen; for some things were before utterly unknown to the writer, as the history of the creation of the world to Moses; the prediction of future events in respect of the prophets; which therefore the Spirit did immediately reveal to them: Other things were known to the writers before, as the history of Christ to the four evangelists, &c·; in respect of these there need no new revelation, but a divine irradiation of the mind of the writer, giving him a divine certainty of those things which he wrote. By this inspiration all of them were infallibly guided, so as they were put beyond all possibility of erring. And this inspiration Was extended not only to the things themselves expressed, but to the words wherein they were expressed, though agreeable to the natural style and manner of each writer, 2 Peter 1:21; Psalms 45:1. Upon this account the scripture is attributed to the Holy Spirit, without making any mention of the penmen, Hebrews 10:15.

Quest. But what opinion are we to form of the books called Apocrypha, And why are they so called ?

Answ. These books, which are found placed in some bibles betwixt Malachi and Matthew are called Apocrypha, which is a Greek word, signifying hidden or absconded. The reasons of this name are given thus (1.) Because they were not acknowledged by the church to be of divine inspiration. (2.) Because the names of the authors were hid. (3.) Because they contain some things unknown to Moses, the prophets and apostles. (4.) Because, for the foresaid reasons, they were judged unworthy to be publicly read in the church. Concerning these books, we believe that they are not of divine inspiration, and therefore no part of the canon of scripture; that is, they are not to be admitted as any part of the rule of faith and manners: and there fore they are of no authority in the church of God for the determining of controversies in religion; and so, though they may be of use as other human writings, yet they are no otherwise to be made use of nor approved. The reasons are,

1. They were not acknowledged by the church of the Jews for canonical: to whom the apostle tells us, Romans 3:2. "the oracles of God,' under the Old Testament dispensation 'were committed,' They even forbade their children to read them till they came to mature age.

2. They were not written in the Hebrew tongue, but in the Greek; and the authors of them were posterior to Malachi, who was the last of the prophets, according to the saying of the Hebrews, that the Holy Ghost went up from Israel after the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi 1:1-14 Mac. iv. 46. plainly shews, that there was no prophet among them, to shew them what they should do with the stones of the polluted altar. And it may clearly appear to any unbiassed person, how the interposing of these books betwixt Malachi and Matthew does out off the beautiful connection between the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament, and how Malachi's prophecy is designed of God to close up the scriptures of the Old Testament, in that he prophecies most distinctly of the coming of Christ, and John the Baptist his forerunner, with the accomplishment of which Matthew begins his gospel, as I observed before.

3. The primitive church for the first four centuries received not these books; and when they came to be read, the reader stood but in an inferior place, they being then read as profitable books, though not of divine authority.

4. They are no where cited by Christ and his apostles. Yea, they are not obscurely rejected by him, while he divides the scriptures into Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, Luke 24:44. And whereas the apostle tells us, that 'prophecy came not of old by the will of man, but that holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Peter 1:21. the authors of these books pretend to no such thing. The author of Ecclesiasticus in the prologue intreats the reader to pardon them, (viz. him and his grandfather), wherein they may seem to come short of some words which they have laboured to interpret. Such an apology is there, 2Ma 15:38.' If I have done well, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.' 2Ma 11:23. the author tells us, he will essay to abridge in one volume the five books of Jason of Cyrene. 2Ma 11:26. he tells how he hath taken on him the painful labour of abridging; that it was a matter of sweat and watching to him: And 2Ma 11:27. "But for the pleasuring of many,' says he, 'we will undertake this great pains.' And more of this stuff has he there; which plainly speaks forth nothing else than human learning and pains, which men desire to have much accounted of amongst others.

Lastly, They neither agree with themselves nor the holy scriptures, as may plainly appear to those who will consider them diligently. 1Ma 6:16. compared with 1Ma 6:4. it is said, that antiochus died at Babylon. Yet 2Ma 1:13-16. it is said, that when he was come into Persia, he was slain in the temple of Nanea, whom he pretended that he would marry, and would receive money in name of dowry, by her priests. Yea, 2Ma 9:28. He is said to have died in a strange country in the mountains. The book of Tobit is stuffed with absurd stories; it makes the angel Raphael to tell a lie, and to teach Tobit's son a devilish art, to drive away the devil with the heart and liver of a fish; and when the evil spirit smelled the smell, he fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, &c. The author of the history of the Maccabees commends Rasis for self murder, and prayer for the dead, 2Ma 12:44-45. These things plainly shew, that these books are not from the Spirit of God.

All this shews the darkness of Popery that receives these books as canonical, and the dregs remaining in the church of England, who, though they do not receive them for canonical, yet mix the reading of portions of them in their churches with the scriptures, while in the mean time, several portions of the holy scripture are passed over, and not read publicly in their service. And whilst we blame the church of England for reading in her service books that are not canonical,

impartiality obliges us to say, that far too small a portion of the books that are canonical is read in the public service of our own church. This is equally culpable. And as there is none of these to be admitted into the canon, so neither can we gratify the Papists with yielding, that there are any books of the scripture lost, lest we reflect on the providence of God, that to a miracle has preserved these books to this day, and has insured the preservation of far less parts than whole books, Matthew 5:18.

III. I proceed to shew the necessity of the scriptures.

1. There was a necessity of the revelation of the doctrine of the scriptures. For though the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable, Romans 1:20. and Romans 2:14-15. yet they are not sufficient to shew us either how we should glorify, or how we may enjoy God, and so are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, that is necessary to salvation. For (1.) There is no salvation out of Christ, Acts 4:12. 1 Corinthians 3:11. there is no salvation through him but by faith, Mark 16:16. John 3:16. and John 17:3. and there can be no faith nor knowledge of Christ but by revelation, Romans 10:14,- - Esther (2.) They who have only nature's light, and so do not enjoy divine revelation, are without God, and have no hope, Ephesians 2:12.; and therefore there was a necessity for preaching the gospel, 1 Corinthians 1:21. (3.) ·Whatever knowledge men may attain to of God by nature, yet saving illumination and conversion can only be got by the revealed will of God written in his word. See Psalms 19:1-14.

2. There is a necessity of the scriptures, or written word, though the Papists whose kingdom is supported by darkness, deny it. It is true, God did teach his church a long time before Moses without the written word; but then the same doctrine that we have in the scriptures, the patriarchs had by extraordinary revelation often repeated; and their long lives gave them opportunity to keep what. was so revealed uncorrupted, and so to hand it down to others. But now both these are gone, and therefore the written word is necessary, (1.) For preserving the doctrine from corruption in such times of apostasy, 2 Peter 3:1. (2.) For the better propagating of the truth, Matthew 28:19. The apostles could not with their voice teach all nations, but by their writings they could. (3.) If the written word were wanting, the church has nothing to look to but uncertain traditions; but the written word is a sure touchstone of doctrines, Isaiah 8:20. a light in a dark place, 2 Peter 1:10. both of which are most necessary.

3. There is a necessity of it not only for beginners, but for those who are more perfect. The scripture is written for all indifferently, Colossians 3:16. Even the most perfect will find enough there, and more than they are able for: 'Open thou mine eyes,' says David, 'that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,' Psalms 119:18. It is but the blindness of enthusiasts to pretend, that it is only for the weaker, and that the more perfect must follow the Spirit: for if that Spirit teach any thing contrary to the written word, it is a spirit of darkness, Isaiah 8:20.; yea, if it teach another doctrine, anathema is pronounced against it, Galatians 1:8.

Thus it plainly appears, that nothing short of scripture-revelation is sufficient to salvation, and that in an objective way; that is, that it is a sufficient rule to lead men to salvation. But something else is requisite to make this rule effectual for that end. No skillor wisdom of men representing them in the dearest point of view, nor till the power of the most elaborate and persuasive reasonings, can produce this effect. This work is the province of the Spirit of God, which he accomplishes by an

internal illumination of the mind, giving blinded sinners a saving discovery of divine truths; by powerfully subduing man's obstinate will, and enabling it cheerfully and readily to obey the will of God and the authority of Christ; and by working upon our affections, exciting in us ardent desires after God and Christ, and a high esteem of divine truth, and removing the prejudices in our minds against it, and opening our hearts to receive the word, and comply with the design thereof.

IV. i shall next shew that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God. Christ is God's personal word, but the scriptures are his written word, Hosea 1:2. The scriptures appear to be the word of God, if we consider,

1. The antiquity of some parts of them, which are more ancient than any human writings, and give us such an history as none but God himself could do, viz. the creation of the world; for how could men tell what was done before man had a being ?

2. The preservation of it to this day, notwithstanding the malice of devils and wicked men against it. If it had not been of God, it could not have continued till now, considering the attempts that have been made to destroy it.

3. The candour and sincerity of the penmen of these sacred writings, who honestly declare what they delivered was received from God, plainly tell their own faults as well as those of others, and every way write as men over-ruled by the Spirit of God.

4. The exact performance of scripture-prophecies. Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus should deliver the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, not only before that captivity took place, but more than an hundred years before that prince was born. Jeremiah, a little before that captivity, foretold it should last seventy years, and that was the precise duration of it. How remarkably have all the prophecies relating to the fall of the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies been fulfilled ! and what an exact accomplishment has there Been of the several prophecies relating to the birth and death of Christ, and the spreading of his kingdom in the world ! The scripture contains many other prophecies which time has shewn exactly performed, and many that are yet to be fulfilled.

5. The blood of many martyrs hath confirmed the divinity of this book, while they joyfully laid down their lives for the truth of it; in which it is evident they were carried up above what human power could do.

6. The scriptures have been confirmed by incontrovertible miracles. All miracles are wrought by God himself; and it is inconsistent with his holy nature to work miracles for confirming a lie or a cheat. Many miracles were wrought by Moses, by Christ, and by his apostles. If then these miracles were done by them, the doctrine they taught was true. Now, we have all rational grounds to suppose, that these miracles were really wrought. It is certain, that the general consent of those who have heard of them goes that way. Now, if it be supposed a cheat that such things were done, then that cheat took place either among those who were said to have seen them, and were witnesses to them or else among those who lived after that generation which is said to have seen them was dead and gone. But neither of these two can be said here. Not the first, for two reasons. (1.) Because these miracles were such things as men's outward senses (their eyes and ears) could be judges of. (2.) They are said to be done, not in a corner, but in the face of the world. Therefore it was impossible that that generation could be imposed upon. If a man should say, that yesterday he divided the river Tweed in presence of us all, and brought us all through on dry land,

it would be impossible for him to make us believe it, for we saw no such thing, nor waded so through that river. Or if he should say, that he came to the church-yard, and raised a dead man in our presence, whom we now see among us, he could never cause us believe it, nor cheat us into a persuasion of the same. Neither could any in after generations invent such a story, and impose the cheat upon others. (1.) Because there are some things done in memory of these miracles. (2.) Such observances did commence from the time that such things were done, as circumcision, the passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. If then the forger would impose it on others, he must make them believe, that these observances have been constantly in use since that time, which, if they were not, could not be believed, because it contradicts the senses: for it would be impossible to make a nation believe that they were all circumcised or baptized, when there was no such thing; and especially that such things were done to them in memory of such a thing as they never heard of.

7. The scriptures must either be from God, or the creature. They cannot be from the creature; for if so, they must be from angels or men. Neither of these can be said. Not the first; for then they should either be from good angels or evil angels. From good angels they cannot be, in regard, they say, they are the word of God, and this would be a most gross cheat which cannot be attributed to good angels; for angels imposing such a cheat on the world could no more be looked on as good, but as evil. With what shadow of reason can it be imagined, that good angels, remaining so, should abuse the name of God as to speak in his name, what he never said? Evil angels it cannot be either, in regard the scripture doth natively tend to overturn the devil's kingdom; it pronounces their doom, discovers their malicious designs, brings men out of their service, and from doing what is pleasing to them. The same way may we reason concerning good or bad men their being the principal authors of the scriptures. And you know what torment the scripture assigns to liars. It remains then that the scripture is of divine inspiration.

Besides, such things are found in the scripture' themselves, as do plainly demonstrate they are the word of God. As,

1. The heavenliness of the matter of the scripture, shews it to be of a divine origin. Therefore they are called the holy scriptures, Romans 1:2. See Psalms 12:6. Nothing carnal or earthly is delivered therein, but all is what becomes those who live above the world, and shall shine in glory. I take this heavenliness of the matter to respect two things. (1.) The sublime mysteries therein revealed, which nature ever so much elevated could never attain to the discovery of. Such is the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the spiritual union between Christ and believers. The light of nature improved by the learned to the utmost advantage, could not teach these things; yet a, few fishermen plainly delivered them. (2.) The most exact holiness of its precepts, commanding all holiness, and forbidding all impurity of heart and life under the pain of damnation; and that so universally, as all the writings of philosophers have come far short of. Here we are taught to love our enemies, to be truly and thoroughly humble and self-denied; and this urged by such arguments as may be most effectual for inciting men to the practice of these duties. Sure this could neither be the work of men, being so opposite to corrupt nature, nor of devils being so opposite to their kingdom and interest, but of that God who is holy, and loveth righteousness.

2. The efficacy of the doctrine, in its convincing and searching the conscience, Hebrews 4:12.; converting the soul from its most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the

world for such a change but the cross, Psalms 19:7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, Psalms 19:8. This efficacy lies not in the bare words, letters, or syllables, which have no other power than to signify the things; but it is the ordinary means which the Spirit makes use of for these ends, without which it will be but a dead letter.

3. The majesty and sublimity of the style, an elevated and grand diction which runs through many passages of the scriptures, particularly in the books of Moses, some parts of the Psalms, in the book of Job, and the writings of the prophets. There are in several passages of the Old Testament such a loftiness of style, so grand an assemblage of bold images and representations, such a collection of noble and majestic sentiments, and so much magnificence and pomp of language, as cannot be found in any human writings whatever. There is something so truly majestic and sublime, so grand and magnificent in the style of the sacred writings, as has forced heathen philosophers to acknowledge it, and select passages therefrom as instances of the true sublime; as does Longinus with regard to the words of God, Let there be, and some other passages. At the same time let it be observed, that there is nothing affected, no flights of false eloquence, no exertions of a luxuriant genius, no laboured strokes of a warm imagination, no forced images, no distorted metaphors, no quaint allusions, or unnatural comparisons which are frequently found in the most admired productions of ancient and modern writers; but the utmost plainness and perspicuity, a noble simplicity, and an elegant familiarity, level to the capacity of the illiterate, reign throughout the sacred volume. So that its style must engage the attention and regard of the learned philosopher and poet, send delight the unlearned peasant. Thus God is frequently brought in speaking to and by the prophets, and his majesty set forth in a majestic style, as Isaiah 57:15. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,' &c. There is no affectation of words there, being below the majesty of the divine law: none are spared, but the scripture speaks as freely and plainly to the great as to the small, to the rich as to the poor.

4. The consent of all the parts of scripture; though written by several hands, and at different times, yet all of them so agreeing in their precepts, narratives of matters of fact, and designs, that there is no irreconcileable difference to be found amongst them. But here the Socinians call us to consider this point at more length; for they say that there is some repugnancy in the scriptures in some things of little or no moment, and that not a seeming but real repugnancy. But we believe that in nothing does one holy writer differ from another in the scriptures, but that such things as seem to be repugnant do in themselves most exactly agree. This principle I shall endeavour to prove.

(1.) There are no things in the Scriptures of little or no moment; and if so, the writers could not err in them. That there are no such things in it;. the scripture plainly teaches, as in the text, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, &c. Romans 15:4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The Jews said, that there was not one point in scripture but mountains of mysteries hang on it. See Matthew 5:18. It argues a profane spirit to talk of the scriptures at that rate. The people of God know that many a time they have read over a scripture in which they could see little or nothing, but afterwards they have seen a great deal in it when the Spirit hath been commentator: and though in some things we never see any weighty thing, must we therefore conclude that there is none there ?

(2.) The holy penmen were, in all that they wrote, acted and guided by the Spirit of God, or wrote all by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as says the text, and 2 Peter 1:20-21. If all scripture was given by inspiration, if no scripture be of private interpretation, nor came by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, how can there be any error in any passage of scripture ? If the scriptures be the word of God, they must be altogether pure, Psal. six. 7, 8.

(3.) Those things in which there is some repugnancy between the penmen of the scriptures, are either a part of the canonical scripture, or not. If they be, then [1.] All scripture is not given by inspiration of God. [2.] The scriptures are holy scriptures, Romans 1:2.; but errors, whether in greater or lesser things, are unholy, and cannot be a part of the holy scriptures. If they be no part of the holy scriptures, why do they charge the holy scriptures with errors therein ?

(4.) If it be so that there is such repugnancy in the scriptures, then they cannot found certain and divine faith; for a fallible testimony can ground only a fallible belief. and how shall we know when they are right, and when they are wrong? One says that he is guided by the Spirit, and tells us such a thing; another says the same, and tells us the contrary: Whom shall we believe? If you say it must be determined by the greater number of the holy penmen, it is well known, that amongst those who are fallible, one may be righter than many. But this is plainly to lean to human testimony; for one speaking by the Spirit is as much to be believed as ten thousand. So that this truly dissolves the authority of the whole scriptures. In short, we refuse that there are any real inconsistencies or contradictions in the holy oracles Of God. Whatever seeming inconsistencies or repugnancies there may be, they may be easily reconciled and have been actually reconciled to satisfy every sober person, by many learned divines, whose writings may be consulted on this head.

5. This scope of the whole scriptures, which is to give all glory to God. The design of them is to exalt none but the infinite majesty of Heaven, to humble all mankind, and empty them of themselves, that God’s grace may be all, and men themselves nothing, but entirely dependent on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

6. The full discovery it makes of the way of man’s salvation. Who could ever have told of the Son of God his dying for the sins of the elect, and have made a discovery of the way of salvation by faith, which the scripture hath plainly set down ?

7· The entire perfection of the scripture; that is, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture.

There are two ways how matters of faith and life are set down in the scriptures. The one is when the thing is set down expressly in so many words; as the unlawfulness of murder, when it is said, "Thou shalt not kill;’ the ordinance of baptism, as in that, ’Go and teach all nations, baptising them,’ &c. The other is by good and necessary consequence, which is when the thing itself is not found in the scriptures in so many words, but doth evidently (in itself) and necessarily flow from the express words of scripture, as the baptising of infants is by good and necessary consequence drawn from that, ’Go ye, and baptise all nations.

Here I shall first prove, that, besides what is to be found in express words in the scriptures, good and necessary consequences deduced-therefrom are also to be admitted, as truly binding as what

is declared in express words there, whether in fundamentals or in such things as are built on the foundation. If one can prove any thing by good and necessary consequence from the scripture, it is all one, as to the binding power on men's consciences, as if it were expressly set down in so many words.

(1.) Good and necessary consequences are such as the word is designed for. What is deduced from them, so is indeed the sense and meaning of the words; and if you have the words without the meaning of them, or without the full meaning of them, in so far ye come short of the true intent of the words. If I bid a man draw near the fire, do I not desire him to warm himself, though I speak not one word of his warming himself" Were not the scriptures written for that end, that 'we through patience and comfort of them might have hope ?' Romans 15:4. But this cannot be obtained without the use of consequences. Are they not profitable for doctrine,--'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works ?" 2 Timothy 3:16. But can this be had without the use of consequences?

(2.) The great fundamental article, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, before the New Testament was written, could not be proved to the Jews by express scripture testimony, but by good and necessary consequence; yet Christ tells them that there could be no salvation for them without the belief of this. 'If ye believe not that I am he (the Messiah),' says he, 'ye shall die in your sins.' John 8:24.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, while he would prove the fundamental article of the resurrection against the Sadducees, does not seek after a text that said in express words, that the dead shall rise again, but proves it by good consequence, yet no less firmly than if he had produced an express text for it, Matthew 22:32. And it is no less evident that the apostles follow him in this method; as in treating of the resurrection of Christ, Acts 2:25. of the resurrection of all mankind, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 and of the justification of a sinner before God, in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

(4.) Such as reject all arguing from scripture by consequences, must either confess that by no scripture this way is condemned, or else they must adduce some express scripture text forbidding it. The last they can never do. If they say the first, then it is approved; otherwise the scripture is no perfect rule of faith and practice, which we shall immediately shew to be false. If they say that the scripture leaves it indifferent, then I ask, how dare they condemn it ?

(5.) Refusing to admit good and necessary consequences from scripture, overturns all religion, both law and gospel, faith and practice. For how shall it be proved, that John or James are obliged to obey the law, and believe the gospel but by Consequence ? where will they find an express text for these ? Only the law speaks to all, the gospel to every hearer of it, and consequently they oblige thee and me. This way, then, of any doctrine its being set down in the scripture being admitted, we are to prove next. That the scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manner; or that the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down therein, &c.;

1. God hath expressly forbidden to add any thing unto his word; therefore it needs no addition, and so is perfect Deuteronomy 4:2. "Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you.' Consider what ye speak of; even of statutes and judgments; statutes, ceremonies, and rites of worship ;

even to these he will have nothing added. So we have all additions prohibited, Proverbs 30:6; end that under a severe penalty, Revelation 22:18.

2. 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' as is expressly asserted, Psalms 19:8. There it is said of it, (1.) it converts the soul; (2.) makes wise the simple; (3.) rejoiceth the heart; and (4.) enlightens the eyes. The apostle plainly asserts the perfection of it, while he tells us, 2 Timothy 3:15. that it is able to make a man wise unto salvation.' How can it be so, unless it teach all things necessary to salvation? It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, &c. What can be desired more ? And that ye may be sure there is nothing wanting in it, he tells you, it is given for that purpose 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' So Christ saith, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them,' Luke 16:29.; clearly importing, that in them is contained what is sufficient to salvation.

3. Consider the end for which the scriptures were written, even 'that believing men may have life,' John 20:31.; that 'through patience and comfort of the scriptures they might have hope,' Romans 15:4. If any thing necessary to salvation were not in them, how would they answer the end for which they were written ?

4. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples all that he had heard of the Father, viz. necessary to their salvation, John 15:15. He commissions them to teach all others, even to the end of the world, what he commanded them, Matthew 28:20. But this they could not do viva voce; therefore they did it in their writings. And whoso considers how exact the apostles were of teaching things of lesser moment, as what day the collection for the poor should be made, &c. cannot think they would neglect any thing necessary to salvation, unless they could not through ignorance or forgetfulness; neither of which can be imputed to them in their writings, being led by the Spirit of God infallibly.

5. The nature of the scriptures teaches us their perfection. For if they be not perfect they cannot be a rule; for a rule must always be commensurable to the thing to be regulated. They are Christ's testament, to which nothing is to be added, being confirmed.

I shall now deduce some inferences from this subject.

1. The holy penmen of the scriptures had a command from God to write, and did not write only occasionally without a command. For that inspiration was an internal command, whereby the Spirit moved them to write, 2 Peter 1:21.

2. The penmen of the scriptures were infallible in their writing, so that they were not mistaken in any thing, even of the least moment: far less is there any real contradiction among them, being all guided by the same Spirit, who inspired the very words, and kept them from all error, 2 Peter 1:20-21.

3. The authority of the scripture in itself, that is, the power it hath to bind the conscience, does not depend on the church, but wholly on God, the author of it. For,

(1.) The church is built upon the scriptures, Ephesians 2:20. 'Upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles. This foundation is not personal; 'for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ: ' but it is doctrinal, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles. Now, it is clear, that the superstructure depends on the foundation, not the foundation on it.

(2.) If the authority of the scriptures depended on the church, then they behoved first of all to believe the authority of the church without the scriptures, and our faith should be built upon human testimony, which is fallible; but we believe the church for the scriptures, and no otherwise, Isaiah 8:20. and human testimony can not found divine faith.

(3.) Whence can any prove that the church is to be believed but from the scripture ? and then to say, that the scriptures must be believed for the church's testimony, is a circle unworthy of men of sense.

(4.) Either the church had reason to receive the scriptures or not. If they had no reason to receive them, they have as little reason to impose them on others. If they had, what was it, but that it was truth, and worthy to be received? Therefore their testimony does not make it truth, or worthy to be believed and obeyed.

(5.) The scripture is God's own word, 2 Timothy 3:16. How blasphemous is it then to deny faith unto God in the scriptures, while he speaks to us in them, unless the testimony of men give authority to his word? This is as much as to say, that God hath his authority from the church, and that he ought not to be believed or obeyed, unless the church commanded it; which is most blasphemous. Of this blasphemy is the church of Rome guilty, who roundly assort that the authority of the scripture depends on the church. I shall only add, that this is the high way to keep Christians off from convincing Turks, Pagans, and Jews, as to the New Testament, while we tell them that the authority of the scripture, wherein our religion is laid down, depends on the church, and that the scriptures are true, because the church says it.

4. The authority of the scripture as to us is not from the church, but from itself; that is, the reason why we receive the scripture as the word of God, it is not because the church says it is so, but because it evidences itself to be so. For as God's works do themselves tell their Maker, so his word declares the Speaker; so that a spiritual discerner must needs say, on the reading of it, though none should recommend, it is the voice of God, not of men. Can we discern an unlearned man's letter from that of a learned Man 1:1 and doth not God's word bear a divine character a It is a light, a lamp, &c. the nature of which is to discover itself. Thus there is objective evidence enough in the scripture; though indeed the subjective evidence cannot be had but by the Spirit of God; so that to him bearing witness by and with the word, we owe the full assurance that it is God's word, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 2:14. and this is the reason why great scholars may be less persuaded of this truth, than the most unlearned peasants; because, though the sun discovers itself sufficiently, yet blind men cannot see it.

Now, that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word, I shall prove by the following arguments.

I. The scripture makes this inward illumination of the Spirit of God necessary for understanding the scriptures, while it ascribes the same wholly unto the Spirit, Matthew 16:17. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it, [Christ's being the Son of the living God] unto thee, but my father which is in heaven;' 1 Corinthians 2:10-12. " God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him a even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God; that we might

know the things that are freely given to us of God.' If the Spirit of God take the same unto himself as his own proper work, how can any arrogate it to themselves, as if by the power of nature they were able for it a

2. There is an utter inability in man by nature to know savingly the things of God. They are above his capacity while he remains in his natural state, and nothing can act beyond the sphere of its activity. This is plain from 1 Corinthians 2:14. where not only the act of receiving them is denied to natural men, but the very power of discerning them; and the reason is given, 'because they are spiritually discerned,' and he wants the organ of discerning spiritually. And this discerning is appropriated to the spiritual man, 1 Corinthians 2:15. Had not the Israelites in the wilderness very great external helps to gain the knowledge of the things of God, Deuteronomy 29:1-29?. a but all was ineffectual. What was the want then a See Deuteronomy 29:4. 'The Lord hath not given you (says ,Moses, to them) an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear.

3. If it were not the spiritual illumination that gave this saving understanding of the things of God, then the greatest adepts in human literature would have most of the saving knowledge of such things as are revealed in the word. This plainly follows: But that it is not so, the scripture testifies, 1 Corinthians 1:20, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe ? where is the disputer of this world ? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ? For 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: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' Many times it is seen to be quite otherwise. And what makes the difference? See Matt. xi. 25. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth (says Christ), because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Even as he hath put this treasure in earthen vessels, to the end the praise might be of God, that it may be seen it is not the act of the preacher, but the power of the Spirit, that gives true understanding.

4. Men without the saving illumination of the Spirit are so far from attaining sufficient knowledge of the things revealed in the word of God, that they judge them foolish, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The doctrine concerning Christ crucified was to the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, who excelled in human learning, foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23.; yea, no less than madness, Acts xxvi. 24. Nay, even the godly themselves, when without the actual influence of the Spirit, are not far from reckoning as they do who are in nature; as in the case of the apostles, looking on the account brought them of the resurrection of their Lord as an idle tale, and not believing it, Luke 24:2. The doctrine, of Christ's resurrection seemed to the disciples as idle tales; how much more so to men utterly destitute of the Spirit, who many times are besides judicially blinded ? 2 Corinthians 4:4.

5. The Lord promises his Spirit to the end men may be taught to know the truths of God savingly, Ezekiel 36:26. John 14:16-17. and John 16:12-13. Has he promised his Spirit in vain? or are we sufficiently furnished already ? If so, why does he promise his Spirit ?

6. The prayers of the saints for this illumination prove the necessity of it, Psalms 119:18. Ephesians 1:17-18. Colossians 1:9. And they pray so, because they feel the need of it: the

experience of the Spirit is that against which there is no disputing.

7. Let us consider that passage, John 6:45. 'And they shall be ? all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath beard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' It is plain that by coming unto Christ is meant saving faith in him. Now, in order to this there is a promise, that they shall all, viz. all the elect, for faith is the saving faith of God's elect, be taught of God, viz. by the Spirit, not merely by external revelation, because whosoever thus hears comes unto Christ: but it is certain that all come not to Christ that hear, and learn of the Father by external revelation only. From all, which it is evident, that unto the sufficient understanding of the things revealed in the scripture the teaching of the Spirit is necessary; and that all who attain to the saving knowledge of these things do believe.

What then remains upon this head but, that we diligently read the holy scriptures as being the word of God, and the rule which he bath given to direct us both as to faith and practice; and that we fervently pray to God, that he may give us his holy Spirit to enlighten our minds in the saving knowledge of the word, without which we will remain in the dark, and the word will be but a dead letter to us ? Lord open oar eyes, that we may understand thy word.

S. The Evil and Danger of Schism

THE EVIL AND DANGER OF SCHISM A Sermon by Thomas Boston preached at Ettrick in the Year 1708

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment. The church of Corinth was now lying bleeding of her wounds, given her not by open and avowed enemies, but by her own children, some saying they were of Paul, others that they were of Apollos, etc. The apostle applies himself to the curing of this rent and broken church, in the words of the text, which is a most pathetical exhortation to unity. In the words we have three things.

1. The compellation, "Brethren:" it is a kindly compellation, whereby he insinuates himself into their affections, or endeavors so to do; for it is hard for faithful ministers to get peoples' affections kept where once divisions enter. In this compellation there is an argument for unity: he minds them that they are brethren; and it is a shameful thing for brethren to fall out by the ears, Genesis 13:8, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee," says Abraham to Lot, "betwixt me and thee," etc., "for we be brethren;" and Genesis 45:24, Joseph says to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

2. There is a most pithy obsecration, "I beseech you, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul turns a petitioner to them for the church's peace, and begs of them, as he did of the jailer, Acts 16:28, that they would do themselves no harm, but lay by the sword of contention; and that it might have the more weight with their consciences, he interposeth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "I beseech you," says he, "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that," etc. It implies two things, 1. It is as much as if he had said, As ye have any regard to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath so often enjoined peace, unity, and brotherly love to his followers, beware of divisions. It is not I, (as if he had said), but Christ, the Prince of peace, that requires this of you. 2. It is as much as if he had said, As ye love the Lord Jesus, as ye tender his honor and glory, speak the same thing, and let there be no divisions among you; for the name of Christ sadly suffers by your contentions, factions, and divisions. The apostle's beseeching of them notes his gentleness, but withal his vehemency of spirit, entreating with them for the peace and unity of the church; he handles their wounds tenderly, yet so as they might see he was in good earnest to have them healed. It imports also how heavy their contentions were to him, how grateful it would be to him if they would unite, and how grievous, if they should continue their divisions still; therefore he obtests them, and after a short adjures them by the name of the Lord, that they would all speak the same thing, and let no divisions be among them: If I cannot obtain this of you, says he, for my own sake, yet let me obtain it of you for Christ's sake. This is the manner of his exhortation.

3. We have the matter of his exhortation, which lies in three things.

1st, He exhorts them to unity of principles, "that ye all speak the same thing;" he beseecheth them, that they would not vent principles contrary to the truth, and to one another; for now, instead of

unity, some were crying one thing, some another, like that confused multitude, Acts 21:34, there was nothing but contention and contradiction among them, till some of them came at length to deny the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.

2dly, He dehorts them from divisions; the word in the Greek is schisms, as ye may see in the margins of some of your Bibles: the word properly signifies a cutting or section in a solid body, as in the cleaving of wood, when the parts of it before united are rent asunder. Thus the one church of Corinth was rent asunder into divers parties and factions, some following one minister, some following another; therefore says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 1:13, "Is Christ divided?" As if he should say, Why, seeing there is but one Christ, are there so many bodies? Where will you get a Christ to head your different and divided party? Through these divisions among them, it would seem, from 1 Corinthians 11:33, they had separate communions, they would not tarry for one another. The apostle also taxeth their divisions, 1 Corinthians 3:3, "For whereas there is among you envying, strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?" Where the word translated "divisions" properly signifies separate standing, where one party stand upon one side, and another party on another side. It denotes such dissension, wherein men separate one from another.

3dly, He exhorts them to amend what was amiss already among them in that matter, to be perfectly joined together, in opposition to their contentions and divisions. The word in the original is very emphatic, and signifies two things, 1. To restore disjointed members into their proper places again, Galatians 6:1, "Restore such an one." It is a metaphor from chirurgeons [surgeons] setting members or joints again; as if he had said, Set such an one in joint again: so it aims at healing the church of her rents, restoring such as had separated and withdrawn. 2. It signifies to perfect and establish in the state to which a person or thing is restored; and so it denotes a firm union betwixt the members of that church; he would have them compacted together as a body, in which all the parts do fitly cleave together, each of them in its proper place; and withal he adds here the bonds of this union, the same mind, that is, the same heart, will, and affections, as the word mind is taken, Romans 7:25, and the same judgment or opinion anent matters; if the last cannot be got, yet the first may. From the words, we draw these following doctrines: -- Doctrine. I. That schism and division is an evil incident to the churches of Christ while in this world.

Doctrine II. That professors ought to beware of schism and division, as they tender the authority and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Doctrine. III. Where schism and division enter into a church, there will be great heats, diversity, yea, contrariety of opinions, people contradicting one another in matters of religion, "That ye all speak the same things," etc.

Doctrine. IV. That however hard it be, yet it is possible to get a rent church healed.

Doctrine. V. That it is the duty of all church members to endeavor the unity of the church, and the cure of schisms: and particularly, it is the duty of disjointed members to take their own places in the body again.

Lastly, that schisms and divisions, as they are grievous to all the sons of peace, so they are in a special manner heavy and afflicting to faithful ministers of the gospel of peace.

Here is work shapen out for many days, but I design not to insist. As to the first of these doctrines, to wit, That schism and division is an evil incident to the churches of Christ in this world; I. I shall illustrate the truth of this doctrine. II. I shall give you some observations, as to the rise and way of carrying on this sad plague in churches. And I challenge your attention, and beseech you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, without prejudice, ye will hear and consider what I am to say; and if I say any thing contrary to the word of God, reject it; but what I may say, as agreeable to God's word, I require it may have place in, and weight with your consciences. I shall endeavor to hold off personal reflections, but must take liberty freely to handle the cause.

I. Then, I shall illustrate this sad doctrine. Alas! it is written, I may say, in letters of the blood of our mother, who cries out, "She is wounded in the house of her friends." This broken, bleeding church, exposed to the laughter of Papists and malignants by her divisions, is a sad instance of it. Now, seeing some are apt to stumble at all religion, by reason of our divisions, and others are apt to pride themselves in them, I shall, for the sake of both, shew, that these things are uncouth, strange, or new things. For which consider,

1. These things are foretold in the scriptures. Our Lord Christ has given us fair warning, Matthew 10:34-36, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother," and so forth. Not that this is the kindly and native effect of the gospel of peace, but so it proves, by reason of the corruptions of men. The apostle tells the church of Ephesus, Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." I shall only add another scripture, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, "After their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and they shall turn away their ears from the truth," etc. From all which we may see, that church-renders shall not be wanting, nor shall they want success.

2. Consider the sad experience of the church in several ages; I shall give you two instances out of the Old Testament; the first you have, Numbers 16:1-50. Even when the church had a Moses and Aaron in it, there was a violent schism set a-foot in it by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. That this business was not so much a sedition in the state, as a schism in the church (though I deny not but there was something of sedition in it, for schism and sedition go often together), is clear from the great cause of the quarrel, which was about the priesthood, as is clear from Numbers 16:3-9, which ye may read at your leisure, but consider especially Numbers 16:10-11, where Moses says, "And seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou, and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?'' Compare with this Jude 1:11, where the seducers, the disturbers of the church, are said to perish in the gainsaying of Core. Many were led aside into this schism, Numbers 16:19, "And Korah gathered all the congregation against them," viz. against Moses and Aaron. Two of the heads of it, being called to come before Moses, sent him a declinature, stuffed with scandalous defamations against him, Numbers 16:12-14, "And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up. Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness?" etc. Yea, when God himself had inflicted the censure on them, the people would not quit their good opinion of them; but as it is in Numbers 16:41, "They murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Another notable schism was that made by the ten tribes, 1 Kings 12:1-33, where two things are very remarkable, 1st, the rise of it, their dissatisfaction with the civil government whereupon they

refused to own Rehoboam as their king, and also separated from the church of Jerusalem, who owned his authority, though he was very far degenerate from the piety and wisdom of David and Solomon. 2d Thing remarkable in it, is the way how it was maintained, viz. by priests that were not of the sons of Levi, Numbers 16:31 of that chapter, that is, men who had no right to the priestly office. The New Testament is so full of dismal accounts this way, that there is not almost an epistle written, wherein we have not something of church rents and divisions, exhortations to unity, or some one thing or another of that kind. See Romans 16:17-18, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." From the lst Epistle to the Corinthians, read our text, and downwards. See 2 Corinthians 10:1-18, 2 Corinthians 11:1-33, and 2 Corinthians 12:1-21, throughout, where Paul is put to defend himself against the slanders cast on him by false teachers, and to compare himself with them. As to the Epistle to the Galatians, I need not cite chapter and verse, the body of that epistle being against them that troubled the churches of Galatia. Ephesians 4:1-32 ye have a pathetical exhortation to unity, from Ephesians 4:1-17. Php 2:1, and downwards, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded." Colossians 2:18, and downwards, "Let no man beguile you of your reward. -- Wherefore are ye subject to ordinances? touch not, taste not, handle not; which things have indeed a shew of wisdom," etc. The Thessalonians are exhorted, 1 Thessalonians 5:14 to "warn them that are unruly." In 2 Thessalonians 2:2, there are some troubling the church, and shaking them in their minds by their doctrine, 1 Timothy 6:3-4, "If any man teach otherwise, -- he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words," etc., and 1 Timothy 1:6-7, "From which some having swerved. have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." 2 Timothy 3:6, the apostle speaks of some "that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women: -- and that resist the truth, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses," 2 Timothy 3:8. Titus 1:11, he tells him, "he must stop the mouths of some that subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not." The Epistle to Philemon, a single person, is to unite him and Onesimus. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the apostle taxes some that forsook the church assemblies, Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." James 3:14, and downwards, "But if ye have bitter envying" (in the Greek it is bitter zeal) "and strife in your hearts, glory not -- This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. -- But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable," etc. "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." 1 Peter 3:8, "Finally, brethren, be ye all of one mind." 2 Peter 2:1-22, read throughout the whole, which treats altogether of false teachers. 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." In the second Epistle of John 10:1-42, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." In 3 John 1:9-10, we find a Diotrephes prating against the apostle "with malicious words." Read the Jude 1:1-25, for I need not cite a verse or two of it to our purpose. See also Revelation 2:1-29 and Revelation 3:1-22. The church of Ephesus had tried those that said they were apostles, and were not, Revelation 2:2, Smyrna was troubled with those that said they were Jews, and were not, but were the synagogue of Satan, Revelation 2:9; so was Philadelphia, Revelation 3:9. The church of Pergamus had them that held the doctrine of Balaam, Revelation 2:14. In Thyatira was Jezebel,

teaching and seducing, Revelation 3:20.

Here is a cloud of witnesses from whom we may clearly learn two lessons,

1st, That though the apostles themselves were alive to guide and govern the churches, yet they would not be able to prevent schisms, divisions, and rending of churches. A second lesson we may learn from them is, That those who had most of the Spirit of God, were of the most peaceable temper, most tender of the peace of the church, most careful to preserve it where it was entire, and most careful to restore it where it was lost.

If we take a view of after-times, we shall find schism and division infecting the church. When the Pagan persecution was over, the fire of contention burnt up the church. Then was that in the Revelation 8:5, accomplished, "Fire from the altar was cast into the earth." When Constantine the Great had restored peace unto the church, she was miserably defaced by the schism of the Donatists, who separated from the church, at first, to eschew the impurity of promiscuous communion. This schism lasted more than two hundred years. They held, that men were defiled with the corruptions of those with whom they kept church communion, and that there was no other true church but their own. That which led them to these extravagancies, was, that the church kept in ministerial communion with her one Cecilian, whom the Donatists would have had deposed; because, as they alleged, that when he was a deacon, he had hindered some people to assist some that were in prison for the cause of Christ, and that he had been ordained by those that were traitors, that is, who had delivered up the Bible to the persecutors: so, thinking the whole church polluted with the fellowship of this man and his fellows, they separated. When the Lord raised up Luther to reform the church from Popery, then came in the Anabaptists, who rebelled against magistrate, and taught sedition: and withal pretended that Luther had made but a half reformation, that he had only cut off the branches of Popery, but they would strike at the root. Hence complained that holy man thus, "It cost us ten years' pains to erect a little church, and then comes one that knows nothing, but to rail on faithful ministers, and he in one moment overturns all." And else-where he says, "They that received the doctrine of the gospel from us, even they persecute us most bitterly." How our own church was thus troubled in the time of former Presbytery, is evident from the writings of worthy men of that time, against separation: so we find an Act of the Assembly, 1643, appointing to search for books tending to separation. I cannot but particularly remark an Act of the Assembly, 1641, sess. 10, against impiety and schism, wherein they charge "all ministers and members of this kirk, to endeavor to suppress all impiety, and mocking of religious exercises." And upon the other part, "That, in the fear of God, they be aware, that under the pretext of religious exercises, otherwise lawful and necessary, they fall not into error, heresy, schism, scandal, self-conceit, and despising of others, pressing above the common calling of Christians, and usurping that which is proper to the pastoral vocation, contempt or disregard of the public means," etc. This I take plainly to be meant of what we call fellowship meetings, which have been so much mocked by wicked men on the one hand, and abused on the other hand to schism, etc. But the Assembly, 1647, sess. 19, in their directions for secret and private worship, and mutual edification, for cherishing piety, for maintaining unity, and avoiding schism and division, which are ordinarily bound in with the Confession of Faith, towards the latter end of the book, they discharge these meetings altogether, as you may see in the seventh direction, where they say, "Whatever hath been the fruits and effects of meetings of persons of divers families, in the times of corruption and trouble, yet such meetings of persons of divers families (except in the cases

mentioned in the directions), are to be disapproved, as tending to the prejudice of the public ministry, to the rending of the families of particular congregations, and (in progress of time) of the whole kirk." I bring not in this to show my own judgment anent these meetings, but to let you see there was a spirit of separation going in these days as well as now: and how the fire of division left not this church till she was cast into the fire of persecution, is too well known. O that it had from that time left us!

II. I come now to the second thing proposed, to give you a few observations, as to the rise and way of carrying on this sad plague in churches. And,

1. I say, God has his own holy ends in these things. By these he tries his people, 1 Corinthians 11:18-19; and thereby he punishes men for the contempt of the gospel, and not receiving the truth in love, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.

2. We find schisms and divisions raised in the church, under the plausible pretext of strictness. This was the way how the churches of Galatia were rent in pieces. The corrupt teachers would needs add the observation of Moses' law to the gospel, as if that were a more perfect and strict way. Thus the corrupt teachers among the Colossians, pretending great strictness, cry, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," Colossians 2:21. This, in part, seems to have been the rise of the schism in Corinth, which the apostle points at in the matter of the Lord's supper, while he says, "Let a man examine himself," 1 Corinthians 11:28. This was the schism of the Novatians and Donatists brought in of old -- that discipline was not exercised, as they would have had, against those that fell in time of persecution.

3. There are ordinarily some (I hope I am not speaking to those with whom the very scripture text will be accounted treason); there are some, I say, who are at great pains going hither and thither to spread the flame, that compass sea and land to make proselytes, Thus we find some traveling from Jerusalem to Antioch through Syria and Cilicia, to make disciples, and disturb the churches, Acts 15:23-24, "Unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls," etc.

4. We may always observe, that one main thing church-renders aim at, is to discredit the ministers of the gospel, as if the word were, Fight neither with small nor great but the ministers; for Satan knows, if once the ministry be made contemptible, and their credit sunk, then they will be useless; and if once they were laid by as useless, his kingdom were in a fair way of thriving. These are the wolves, who, though they be in sheep's clothing, yet discover themselves by barking at the shepherds: so did Korah. Look the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, and see how the renders of these churches railed upon and discredited the apostle Paul; they said he was no lawful apostle; hence he is so oft put to clear his call, 1 Corinthians 9:1-2; Galatians 1:1-24 and Galatians 2:1-21. They sought a proof of Christ speaking in him, 2 Corinthians 13:3; they charged him with levity and inconstancy, as if his words were not to be regarded, 2 Corinthians 1:17; they charged him with walking after the flesh, 2 Corinthians 11:2; they held him out to be a vain-glorious person, and a very contemptible man, 2 Corinthians 11:9-10; see the four last chapters of 2 Corinthians.

5. We often find they have great pretenses to holiness, and attainments above ordinary; so they are said to go in sheep's clothing, and to transform themselves into apostles of Christ: and no

marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:13-14. And it doth not a little favor their design, that men who have suffered for the cause of Christ, are sometimes engaged in it, which is clear from what the apostle says, comparing himself with the renders of the church of Corinth, 2 Corinthians 11:23, "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more: in prisons more frequent;" which clearly holds forth, that they had been sufferers and prisoners for the cause as well as he: yea, really godly persons may be engaged in it, Revelation 2:20, where we find Jezebel seducing Christ's servants; for sometimes even good men may run the devil's errands, and yet be saved at last.

Lastly, We may observe what characters the scriptures give such, 2 Peter 2:10, "Presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." 1 Timothy 6:4, "Proud, (for only by pride cometh contention), knowing nothing, but doting about questions," etc. Romans 16:17-18, they are said to be "such as serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly," etc. They are entertained by those "that have itching ears," 2 Timothy 4:3. See how the apostle strikes at the root of division, Php 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." Men that are irritated by a church, vain-glorious and conceity, esteeming themselves better than others, are dangerous men, and fit wedges to cleave the church of Christ asunder.

Now I shall name the second doctrine, and then apply.

Doctrine II. That professors ought to beware of schism and division, as they tender the authority and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me apply it in the words of our text, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Dearly beloved, as ye tender the authority and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, beware of this schism and division that is now troubling this church. I foresee it will be needless for me to offer to press this exhortation with motives, till I have removed three prejudices out of the way. The first is, that they are the strictest party: the second is, that the church has given them just ground to separate: the third is, that their principles are the principles of our covenanted reformation. Some, it may be, will be amazed to hear us offer to question these things; but I beseech you consider what I say. The first prejudice then is, That those who dissent and separate from us are the strictest party. In answer to this, consider there is a twofold strictness: a strictness in practice, and a strictness in opinion. As for strictness in the point of a holy practice, life and conversation; though they seem in a late printed paper to appropriate the name of the godly to their own party, yet God forbid I should appropriate it to ours. Only I shall say, that among those that conscientiously attend the ordinances this day in our church, there are people as eminent for holiness of life, and close walking with God, that have as much of the exercise of godliness upon their spirits, and acquaintance and communion with God, as any in the nation; so far as I can discern. I could say more to this purpose, but that I desire not to give offense. As for the ministry, whatever defects be among them; and though there are many of them with whom I have no acquaintance; yet there are among them, of whom I could say (if it were lawful to say it of any man), O that my soul were in their soul's stead! and at whose feet I would willingly sit down and learn the knowledge of Christ and practical godliness: this I declare to be my opinion of them, however low thoughts many have

of them. As for strictness of opinions, as to government and church communion, if we measure strictness according to the dictates of men's own spirits, we will yield to them for strictness; and so would our Lord to the Pharisees, and the apostles to the false teachers. But if we measure strictness according to the word of God, we deny they are strictest, but they are indeed widest from the rule. I will follow Christ to the synagogue of the Jews (I hope some of you at least may understand what I say) and in so doing I will be more strict than those that scruple to follow Christ's example, for fear they be involved in the guilt of the corruptions among them; for the nearer I follow Christ, the more strict I am, if strictness be measured according to the word of God. However, this is but an assertion; but it brings me to the second thing, where I shall prove it. The second prejudice is, That the church has given them just ground to separate; and therefore they cry out on the Commission of the General Assembly, for representing them to the world as schismatics. To this I answer, That it is plain they have made a total separation from us, and refuse communion with us in ordinances, unless it be at some times to serve a turn. If this their separation from us be a sin, then their separation is a schism: but so it is, that their separation from us is sinful, which I shall prove by one argument, not to multiply words. The argument is this, Those who reject communion in the ordinances of Christ with a true church, and separate from her, because of corruptions in her, while in the meantime they might keep communion with her without sin, are guilty of schism and sinful separation: this I think will not be denied, for if our thus keeping communion be not our sin, it must be our duty; surely it is not left indifferent. But so it is, that our dissenters do thus reject communion with us, and separate from us, while, in the meantime, they might keep communion with this church without sin: therefore their separation is schism, and they are schismatics. That they might keep communion with us without sin, that is, without involving themselves in the guilt of the corruptions of the church, will appear, if ye consider, that there are no corruptions amongst us, whether real or pretended, which the church obligeth them to approve or join in the practice of, as terms of communion with her: nor is there any real or pretended truth which they own, that the church obligeth them to renounce, as a term of communion with her. This holdeth absolutely as to the people for laick-communion, as they call it; and I am sure it has been offered to some of them, that they should be allowed to exonerate their own consciences, by protesting against these things which they look upon as corruptions amongst us, if they would but come and join with us. As for ministerial communion, it must be remembered that the ministers of this Church are obliged to own the Confession of Faith, as the confession of their faith, which is very just; and if we will believe the leaders of that party, they own it as well as we; so that herein they will move no debate. It remains then that they may keep communion with us without sin, unless mere joining in communion with a church, wherein there are many corruptions be a sin, and defile a man. To this narrow point, I think, the controversy betwixt them and us is brought: This I take to be the very foundation of the separation, which if it fall, all falls together with it: and that this is a gross untruth, I shall evince by two arguments. The first argument is from Revelation 2:24-25, "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, - as many as have not this doctrine, -- I will put upon you none other burden; but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." In the church of Thyatira, Jezebel was suffered to teach and seduce Christ's servants; for suffering of her the angel is reproved, and consequently called to amend this fault. The party that kept themselves pure are not required to separate; nay, in effect, are commanded to continue in the communion of the church; while the Lord expressly tells them, "He will lay no other burden upon them," but commands them "to hold fast," and yet there is not one word anent their separating to keep

themselves pure. This could not have been, if their keeping communion with the church of Thyatira, in which there were such gross corruptions, and corrupt members, had been a sin. The second argument is from our Lord's example, Luke 4:16, "And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." What corruptions were in the Jewish church in Christ's day, ye may find by reading the Gospels, as great, I dare say, as can in any measure of modesty be pretended to be in the Church of Scotland; and ye would remember they were a covenanted land as well as we; yet our Lord keeps church communion with them in the ordinances of God; though he joined not with them in their corruptions, he joined with them in the ordinances, and consequently it was no sin; and people may keep themselves from the guilt of corruptions in a church, and yet keep communion with a church wherein these corruptions are. Mark, that it was his custom to go to the synagogue in the place where he was brought up, for it plainly relates to his custom which be had while he lived a private man in Nazareth, seeing it appears from the context that this was the first time he was in Nazareth, after he had entered upon the public exercise of his ministry; which cuts off that exception, that Christ went thither only to preach to them. Nay, afterwards, did he not go to their solemn feasts? This he did also before, and we have plain scripture for his hearing their teachers, Luke 2:42, "And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast;" and in the verse immediately preceding, it is said of holy Joseph and Mary, "they went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover," so far were they from separating. And in Luke 2:46, "They found him in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." They that would find this point more largely proved, let them consult Rutherford's "Peaceable Plea for Presbytery," and Durham on Scandal, and on the Revelation, both proving this point against the separatists of their time.

I come now to the third prejudice; and I beseech you bear with me, for if I were to handle this point in an ordinary, ye should not hear so much of it at once. Our great business is to preach Christ, if we could get leave to do it for our divisions. The third prejudice, I say, is, That their principles wherein they differ from us, are the principles of our covenanted reformation, and that their practices, in the points of difference, are agreeable thereto: and so they give out that they adhere to our National, and solemn League and Covenants, Confession of Faith, Directory, etc. But we will examine their pretensions in these matters.

First, then, As to the National Covenant, I shall take notice of two things. 1. I find these words in the National Covenant, "This true reformed kirk, to the which we join ourselves willingly, in doctrine, faith, religion, discipline, and use of the holy sacraments, as lively members of the same, in Christ our Head, promising and swearing by the great name of the Lord our God, that we shall continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this kirk." Let any compare with this, the Assembly 1638, their explanation of the National Covenant, as ye have it ses. 16, of that Assembly, where, repeating these foresaid words of the National Covenant, they subjoin, "But so it is, that Episcopal government is abhorred and detested, and the government by ministers and elders, in assemblies general and provincial, and presbyteries, was sworn to, and subscribed, in subscribing that Confession, and ought to be holden by us, if we adhere to the meaning of the kirk, when that Confession was framed, sworn to, and subscribed, unto which we are obliged by the national oath and subscription of this kirk, as is evident by," etc. Now, I would atppeal to the conscience of any separatist who hath knowledge to discern things that differ, whether or not we

have the same doctrine and discipline that they had, when that covenant was first taken; and the same doctrine and discipline which the Assembly 1638 declares to be the doctrine and discipline meant in that covenant, unto which we are obliged by the national oath. Seeing then we have the same doctrine and discipline, they are, by the National Covenant, obliged to join themselves to this kirk, and to continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline thereof; and, by their separating, they make themselves plainly guilty of the breach of this substantial part of the covenant. And hence, by the bye, appears the unreasonableness of speaking so slightly of these days, the doctrine and discipline of that time being that which the National Covenant still binds to.
2. I find, that at the first taking of the covenant, they swear to maintain the king's authority: as also, when, with additions, it was renewed in the year 1638, they swear to stand to the defense of his majesty's person and authority. How agrees our dissenters' principle, rejecting the authority of the queen, with this part of the covenant? O, say they, "she is not a covenanted queen, and therefore cannot be queen of a covenanted land." Strange prejudices! Was not Scotland a covenanted land long ere the solemn League and Covenant was heard tell of? Was not king Charles I king of a covenanted land at that time when the covenant was renewed, and his authority sworn to be defended? But was he a covenanted king? Did he own their covenant? No, no; upon the contrary; he obliged some of their nobles at London to abjure it, declared the covenanters rebels, and brought down an army against them to force them from it. As for the solemn League and Covenant, we find them guilty the same way. It binds us expressly against schism, as well as Prelacy, superstition, and heresy. And that they are guilty of schism has been proven before. It also bound to the maintaining of the king's authority, it being far from the mind of the covenanters to cast off the authority of the magistrate, though it was entered into without the king's consent. Was it ever the mind of the covenanters that they would own no king, but one that had taken this covenant? I am sure the Parliament of Scotland thought not so, when in the year 1649 they proclaimed and declared to all the world, That Charles II was king of Great Britain, etc., their sovereign lord and king; and this was a full year before he took the covenant: for which see the Apologetical Relation, pp. 64, 65. Nor did the General Assembly 1649 think so, when in their letter to the king's majesty (to be found amongst the printed Acts of the Assembly, in their last session), before he was come home, or had taken the covenant, they call him most gracious sovereign; and subscribe the letter thus, Your majesty's most loyal subjects, and humble servants, the ministers and elders convened in this national Assembly of the kirk of Scotland: while in the meantime they tell him in the same letter, That he had settled a peace with the Irish Papists, the murderers of so many thousands of his Protestant subjects, and granted to them (contrary to the standing laws of his royal progenitors) a full liberty of their abominable idolatry; which, say they, cannot be otherwise judged, but a giving of your royal power to the Beast; and they exhort him to lay aside the service-book. And several other things may be there found, that may make men blush to talk of their agreeing with the Church of Scotland in her principles in these times, and yet rejecting the authority of the present queen. And, which is most lamentable, even those worthies that laid down their lives for the covenants, whose testimonies are recorded in Naphtali, having owned the king's authority, and prayed for him on the scaffolds, must by this new doctrine be reputed to die as fools, who understood not the covenants they were laying down their precious lives for. As to the Confession of Faith,

1. How does their refusing to pray for the queen, to pay her cess, and to own her authority, because she is not a covenanted queen, agree with the Confession of Faith, chap. 23, § 4, "It is

the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to pay them tribute and other dues, and to be subject to their authority for conscience sake: infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority?" I know they will say, that article is meant of lands not covenanted: there had been some shadow of force in this perhaps, if this Confession of Faith had been framed before the covenant: but upon the contrary it was long after, and was the product of the solemn League and Covenant, as appears from the first article of the Covenant, in these words, "And shall endeavor to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith," etc. The solemn League and Covenant was sworn in the year 1643, the Confession of Faith was sent hither and approven by the Assembly not till the year 1647, for which see the Act of assembly, printed before the Confession. And can we think, that those who, in pursuance of the covenant, framed this Confession of Faith, to declare to the world the faith of covenanters, would so juggle, as to put in articles of faith which would bind others, but not themselves?

2. How does their reckoning the taking the oath of allegiance to the queen, one of the steps of the Church's defection, consist with Confession, chap. 22, §2, "A lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority, in such matters ought to be taken;" and §3, of the same chapter, "Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath, touching any thing that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority?" It is true, they reckon her no lawful queen; but one error will not atone for another. The famous author of the Apologetical Relation was not of our dissenters' mind (nay, he thought there had been no Christian of their mind, and for ought I know there were none in these days), for, speaking of the reasons why the oath of supremacy, called then, though falsely, the oath of allegiance, should be refused, and answering this objection, viz. such as refuse this oath of allegiance, declare that they are not dutiful and loyal subjects, he saith, It hath been shown what difference there is betwixt this oath and the oath of allegiance; and there is no minister or Christian should scruple at the taking the pure oath of allegiance, Apol. Rel. p. 259. If it was this author's mind, that no minister or Christian should have scrupled the oath of allegiance to king Charles II when he had taken the covenant, broken it, and overturned the work of reformation, sure, he would far less have thought it a sin to take the oath of allegiance to the present queen.

3. How doth their separating from this Church, lest they be involved in the guilt of the corruptions amongst us, by keeping communion with us, agree with Conf. chap. 26, §2, "Saints, by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God; -- which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus?"

4. How doth that principle of theirs, sometime at least owned by them, though left out in their last paper, against the power of the magistrate to cal assemblies, agree with Conf. chap. 31 §2, "As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons to consult and advise with about matters of religion?" and with Act of Assembly 1638, sess. 26, concerning yearly General Assemblies, where they say, "If, in the meantime, it shall please the king's majesty to indite a General Assembly, ordaineth all presbyteries, universities, and burghs, to send their commissioners, for keeping the time and place which shall be appointed by his majesty's proclamation?" They cry out on the encroachment of the magistrates in dissolving Assemblies; but as our Assemblies are constituted in the name of Christ, so are they dissolved in his name. What dissolution the magistrate makes, is looked upon as the dismissing of the members. There have

indeed been encroachments made by the magistrate in dissolving Assemblies before they had done their business, and there have been protestations made against this. And though, in the late paper, they charge the Church for not protesting against the encroachments, and recording the same; yet that protestations have not been made against them, is an untruth: but where the magistrate's deed is not recorded, neither are the protestations recorded. I was eye and ear-witness to the magistrate's dissolving the Assembly in the midst of business; and protestations were made against it, and for the Church's intrinsic power; and, from every corner of the house, members adhering thereto. And this protesting is recorded in the Acts of Assembly; so that, from my certain knowledge, I can say they speak an untruth in that charge in the declinature; yea, I have the Acts of the Assembly by me, where they, or any that question the truth of what I say, may read it with their own eyes.

5. How doth their rejecting and despising the testimony of the Commission of the General Assembly against the Union, and reproaching them for it, because it was given into the Parliament by way of humble address, and not by way of protestation, agree with Confession, chap. 31, §5, "Synods and councils are to handle and conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical, and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs, which concern the commonwealth, unless, by way of humble petition, in cases extraordinary, or by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate?"

Lastly, How does their crying out on the magistrate's occasionally appointing fasts and thanksgivings, agree with the Confession of Faith, allowing the magistrate to call Assemblies? This I spoke to formerly in another sermon. And further, how agrees it with the last paragraph of the Directory concerning public solemn fasting, where we have these words, "Besides solemn and general fasts enjoined by authority, we judge," etc. It may be observed how frequently the apostles enjoin obedience to magistrates, and honoring of them, as 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I exhort therefore, that prayers be made for kings, and for all that are in authority." Romans 13:1, "Let, every soul be subject unto the higher powers," etc. Titus 3:1, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." 1 Peter 2:13, and downwards. All which may shew us, that we have no more right to take away the fifth command out of the decalogue, that requires obedience to magistrates, than the Papists have to take away the second, which condemns their idolatry. I think there is a strange inclination amongst some that profess religion, not only amongst dissenters, but others, to speak evil of dignities, and to embrace every thing that may make against the magistrate; so that the murdering of king Charles I, wherewith Presbyterians are slandered by Papists and malignants, is owned and adopted by some, as if it had been a laudable action. Wo's me! that ignorance, and an inclination to vilify magistrates, should give such an handle to the enemy against us. If it was such a glorious action, the sectaries must have the glory of it; for it was they, and not Presbyterians, that did the deed, and it was protested against by the commissioners both from the Church and state of Scotland, for which they were hardly used at London; for which see Apol. Rel. p. 64. Yea, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1649, gave their testimony against it in their seasonable warning, sess. 27, they say, "That prevailing party of societies in England, who have broken the covenant -- and taken away the king's life, look upon us with an evil eye." And in their exhortation to their brethren in England, "We have obtained this mercy, to be steadfast to our old principles, in bearing free and faithful testimony against their proceedings, both in reference to the toleration and government, and the taking away the king's

life." And in their letter to the king, "W do from our hearts abominate and detest that horrid fact of the sectaries, against the life of your royal father our sovereign." Both which are to be found in the last session of that Assembly.

Let me now renew my exhortation and press it. "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." Beware of division yourselves, and give your help to recover, in all tenderness, those that have withdrawn, and encourage them not in their way. I am persuaded, that if they were not so much countenanced and encouraged by those that are the hearers, the number of such would not be so great as it is. Let not that itching ear get place with you, so as to run away to their meetings, whenever ye have opportunity, and so to cast yourselves into a snare, and to do what in you lies to strengthen the division, and trample on the grave authority of the church, whereby one of their preachers is deposed from the ministry, and the other, who never was a minister, his license to preach is declared null and void; and both are certified, that if they repent not, and amend their ways, they shall be excommunicated. I know it is said, that it is thought strange, the Commission threateneth to censure these men with the highest censures of the Church, while yet they declare them to be none of their communion. But I think it more strange to find men amused with this, who though some curates, and others who have been censured by this Church, who were as little of our communion as these men, yet are dissatisfied that the Church does not censure more of them, and that more severely. Beware then of this division, I beseech you,

1. For their sakes that have withdrawn, that ye may not confirm them in their course, tending so much to the disadvantage of their souls, in withdrawing from the means of grace and knowledge, which they stand in need of, as well as others. O Sirs, be concerned this way; the Lord’s people are of an uniting and gathering spirit, Isaiah 66:20, "And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, -- to my holy mountain." They shall bring them not by force, but by gospel-motives. But some of them are far off; what then? yet they shall bring them; may be they cannot walk, then shall they bring them on horses; may be they are so weak they cannot ride on horses, then they shall get chariots; some may be so sickly they cannot come in chariots, then they shall come in litters that are for carrying of sick folk: But by all means they will endeavor to bring them to the mountain of the Lord. Some will not concern themselves this way, but let every one do as they please in these matters. But O for this gathering spirit!

2. I beseech you for the sake of those, both amongst them and us, that have no religion. O Sirs, what should come of the many perishing souls up and down Scotland, that are strangers to Christ and their own soul’s state, if, as these men would have it, all should leave us, and we be left to preach to the empty walls, or hold our tongues? Will they be able for the whole kingdom ?

3. I beseech you, for your own sakes, have pity on your souls, cast not away your spiritual food; yield not so to Satan, who, if he could, would set you at variance with the ordinances, because he well knows that men in that case may get greater ease in their lusts, for it will be long ere a reproof be reached from the pulpit to the fields, or their firesides. I am very apprehensive, that the preaching of the word, as being leveled at peoples’ state, and case of their souls before the Lord, has been over hot for some, that has made them withdraw from ministers, as men that tormented them that dwell upon the earth.

4. I beseech you for the Church’s sake, whose beauty is marred with division, Song of Solomon 1:6, "Look not upon me, because I am black: --my mother’s children were angry with me." There is no danger from enemies without, like that from divisions within. The unity of the Church would be the stability of it, Isaiah 33:20, "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." Though the kingdoms of the world be built on mountains, yet they shall fall; but the Church, when she is a quiet habitation, though but a tent, she shall stand; and though that tent be but fixed with stakes, yet they shall not be removed: though it be fixed but with cords, not with great ropes, yet none of them shall be broken. Division mars reformation in a church. It is very remarkable how discipline was weakened in the church of Corinth; divisions were so hot there, the incestuous man was tolerated amongst them, they could not get that work minded or plied for the contentions among them. Zephaniah 3:9, "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." There is a reforming time, and then they will serve the Lord with one consent, so we read it; but in the first language, it is one shoulder; then shall, as it were, all set one shoulder to the Lord’s work, and then the work cannot but prosper.

5. I beseech you for ministers’ sakes. Ministers are made very odious this day by the dividers of the Church; but we hope they have not made such impressions on you, but that you, at least some of you, will do something for our sake. Our request then is, that ye would not burden our spirits with division, that ye would not mar the Lord’s work in our hands, and make our work a burden to us; ye see that in other things we are not mere ignorants more than yourselves; that in other things we are not men of prostitute consciences more than yourselves; must a man then be accounted quite ignorant of his duty, or one that will go over the belly of his own light, in things properly belonging to his office, just because he is a member of this Church at this day? Be astonished at this, O ye heavens, be horribly afraid, O earth! I am sure it is a changed world with some, to whom it may be said in the words of the apostle, Galatians 4:14-17, "And my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not; -- but received me as an angel of God. -- Where is then the blessedness you spake of? For I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that you might affect them."

Lastly, I beseech you, for Christ’s sake, that ye beware of division. I beseech you for the sake of the Prince of peace, who in his solemn prayer prayed for the uniting of his people, and lays an astonishing weight on it, John 17:21, "That they all may be one; --that the world may believe that thou hast sent me:" for his sake who, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his supper, to seal our union and communion with God, and with one another: for his sake who laid down his life to procure our peace with God, and shed his precious blood to unite his elect, Ephesians 2:14, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." As ye tender the authority, as ye tender the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, beware of division. As ye would have his presence with, and blessing upon the Church, and upon the parish, beware of division: Psalms 133:1-3, "Behold, how good and holy pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." And so I close with the apostle, 2 Corinthians 13:11, "Finally, brethren,

farewell: be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Now to the God of peace, even to the Father, the fountain of peace; to the Son, the purchaser of peace; to the Holy Ghost the worker of peace, be glory and praise, for ever and ever. Amen. http://www.naphtali.com/schism.htm

Chapter 122

S. The Manner of Discovering the True Sense of Holy Scripture

The Manner of Discovering the True Sense of Holy Scripture by Thomas Boston

1 The sense of the scripture is but one, and not many. There may be several parts of that one sense subordinate one to another; as some prophecies have a respect to the deliverance from Babylon, the spiritual by Christ, and the eternal in heaven; and some passages have one thing that is typical of another: yet these are but one full sense, only that may be of two sorts; one is simple, and another compound.

Some scriptures have only a simple sense, containing a declaration of one thing only; and that is either proper or figurative. A proper sense is that which arises from the words taken properly, and the figurative from the words taken figuratively. Some have a simple proper sense, as, 'God is a Spirit,' 'God created the heavens and the earth;' which are to be understood according to the propriety of the words. Some have a simple figurative sense, as, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,' &c. These have but one simple sense; but then it is the figurative, and is not to be understood according to the literal meaning of the words, as if Christ were a tree, &c. Thus you see what the simple sense is. The compound or mixed sense is found wherein one thing is held forth as a type of the other; and so it consists of two parts, the one respecting the type, the other the antitype; which are not two senses, but two parts of that one and entire sense intended by the Holy Ghost: e.g. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to it and be healed. The full sense of which is, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that, &c. even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Here is a literal and mystical sense, which make up one full sense betwixt them. Those scriptures that have this compound sense, are sometimes fulfilled properly (or literally, as it is taken in opposition to figuratively) in the type and antitype both; as Hosea 11:1. 'I have called my Son out of Egypt,' which was literally true both of Israel and Christ. Sometimes figuratively in the type, and properly in the antitype, as Psalms 69:21. 'They gave me vinegar to drink.' Sometimes properly in the type, and figuratively in the antitype, as Psalms 2:9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.' Compare 2 Samuel 12:31. Sometimes figuratively in both, as Psalms 41:9, 'Yea, mine own familiar friend hath lifted up his heel against me; which is meant of Ahithophel and Judas. Now the sense of the scripture must be but one, and not manifold, that is, quite different and nowise subordinate one to another, because of the unity of truth, and because of the perspicuity of the scripture.

2. Where there is a question about the true sense of scripture, it. must be found out what it is by searching other places that speak more clearly, the scripture itself being the infallible rule of interpreting of scripture. Now that it is so, appears from the following arguments.

(1.) The Holy Spirit gives this as a rule, 2 Peter 1:20-21. After the apostle had called the Christians to take heed to the scripture, he gives them this rule for understanding it, 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation of our own exposition. For the prophecy

came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As it came, so is it to be expounded: but it came not by the will of man; therefore we are not to rest on men for the sense of it, but holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and so never erring; therefore we are to look to the dictates of the same Spirit in other places.

(2.) There are several approved examples of this, comparing one scripture with another, to find out the meaning of the Holy Ghost, as Acts 15:15. And to this agree the words of the prophet,' &c. The Bereans are commended for this, Acts 17:11. Yea, Christ himself makes use of this to show the true sense of the scripture against the devil, Matthew 4:6. 'Cast thyself down,' said that wicked spirit; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c. Matthew 4:7. 'It is written again,' says Christ, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And thus our Lord makes out the true sense of that scripture, that it is to be understood only with respect to them who do not cast themselves on a tempting of God.**

**The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself; and, therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture which is not manifold but one, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly. 2 Peter 1:20-21; Acts 15:16

Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter I.9.

Chapter 123

S. The Nature of that Faith and Obedience which the Holy Scriptures Teach

The Nature of that Faith and Obedience which the Holy Scriptures Teach by Thomas Boston

First, as to faith. Divine faith is a believing of what God has revealed, because God has said it, or revealed it. People may believe scripture truths, but not with a divine faith, unless they believe it on that very ground, the authority of God speaking in his word. And this divine faith is the product of the Spirit of God in the heart of a sinner, implanting the habit or principle of faith there, and exciting it to a hearty reception and firm belief of whatever God reveals in his word. And the faith which the scripture teaches is what a man is to believe concerning God. This may be reduced to four heads: What God is; the persons in the Godhead; the decrees of God relating to every thing that comes to pass; and the execution of them in his works of creation and providence. Now, though the works of creation and providence show that there is a God, yet that fundamental truth, that God is, and the doctrines relating to the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence, God's acts and purposes, the creation of all things, the state of man at his creation, his fall, and his recovery by the mediation and satisfaction of Christ, are only to be learned from the holy scriptures. Hence we may infer,

1. That there can be no right knowledge of God acquired in an ordinary way without the scriptures, Matthew 22:29. 'Ye do err,' said Christ to the Sadducees, 'not knowing the scriptures.' As there must be a dark night where the light is gone, so those places of the earth must needs be dark, and without the saving knowledge of God, that lack the scriptures. Thus the Apostle tells the Ephesians, that, before they were visited with the light of the gospel, they were 'without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' Ephesians 2:12.

2. That where the scriptures are not known, there can be no saving faith. For, says the Apostle, Romans 10:14-15, Romans 10:17. 'How 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, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet. of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

3. That there is nothing we are bound to believe as a part of faith but what the scripture teaches, be who they will that propose it, and whatever they may pretend for their warrant. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isaiah 8:20. No man must be our master in these things: 'For one is our master even Christ,' Matthew 23:10. He is Lord of our faith, and we are bound to believe whatever he has revealed in his word.

Secondly, As to obedience, it is that duty which God requires of man. It is that duty and obedience which man owes to God, to his will and laws, in respect of God's universal supremacy and

sovereign authority over man; and which lie should render to film out of love and gratitude. The scriptures are the holy oracle from whence we are to learn our duty, Psalms 19:11. 'By them is thy servant warned,' says David. The Bible is the light we are to take heed to, that we may know how to steer our course, and order the several steps of our life. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path,' says the Psalmist, Psalms 119:105. From whence we may infer,

1. That there can be no sufficient knowledge of the duty which we owe to God without the scriptures. Though the light of nature does in some measure show our duty to God, yet it is too dim to take up the will of God sufficiently in order to salvation.

2. That there can he no right obedience yielded to God without them. Men that walk in the dark must needs stumble; and the works that are wrought in the dark will never abide the light; for there is no working rightly by guess in this matter. All proper obedience to God must be learned from the scriptures.

3. That there is no point of duty that we are called to, but what the scripture teaches, Isaiah 8:20, mentioned before. Men must neither make duties to themselves or others, but what God has made duty. The law of God is exceeding broad, and reaches the whole life of man, outward and inward, Psalms 19:1-14; and man is bound to conform himself to it alone as the rule of his duty.

Thirdly, As to the connection of these two: faith and obedience are joined together, because there is no true faith but what is followed with obedience, and no true obedience but what flows from faith. Faith is the loadstone of obedience, and obedience the touchstone of faith, as appears from James 2:1-26:They that lack faith cannot be holy; and they that have true faith, their faith will work by love. Hence we may see,

1. That faith is the foundation of duty or obedience, and not obedience or duty the foundation of faith, Titus 3:8. 'This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men;' and that the things to be believed are placed before the things to be practised, in order to distinguish between the order of the things in the covenant of grace, and what they were under the covenant of works. Under the latter, doing, or perfect obedience to the law, was the foundation of the promised privilege of life; but under the former, the promise is to be believed, and the promised life is to he freely received: and thereupon follows the believer's obedience to the law, out of gratitude and love for the mercy received. This appears from the order laid down by God himself in delivering the moral law from mount Sinai. He lays the foundation of faith, first of all, in these words, 'I am the Lord thy God,.' &c. which is the sum and substance of the covenant of grace; and then follows the law of the Ten Commandments, which is as it were grafted upon this declaration of sovereign grace and love, Exodus 20:2-18. And let it be remembered, that the Apostle Paul calls gospel-obedience the obedience of faith, as springing from and founded upon faith. And if we examine the order of doctrine laid down in all his epistles, we shall find, that he first propounds the doctrine of faith, or what man is to believe, and upon that foundation inculcates the duties that are to be practised.

2. That all works without faith are dead, and so cannot please God. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and without or separate from Christ we can do nothing. Faith is the principle of all holy and acceptable obedience.

3. That those who inculcate moral duties without proclaiming the necessity of regeneration, and union with Christ, as the source of all true obedience, are foolish builders; they lay their foundation on the sand, and the superstructure they raise will soon be overturned; and they pervert the gospel of Christ, Such would do well to consider what the Apostle says, Galatians 1:9, 'If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.'

S. The Old and New Man in Believers

The Old and New Man in Believers

THOMAS BOSTON A Sermon preached, on a sacramental occasion, at Maxton, in the year 1729.

Romans 6:6, Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. THE sanctification of sinners is no less a mystery than their justification: the former springing out of the cross of Christ unto them, through the intervention of faith knitting the sinner to a crucified Christ, as well as the latter. Hence the apostle — having asserted the insurance of the sanctification of believers, that they shall certainly walk in " newness of life," Romans 6:4; in "the likeness of Christ's resurrection," Romans 6:5, i.e. as Christ, during the forty days after his resurrection, lived in the world after a new manner, very different from his manner of life in it before his death — brings the ground of it from the cross of Christ, in the words of the text. In which we have,

1. The ground insuring holiness of life in believers united to Christ, "Our old man is crucified with him." This secures their holiness of life, in such manner as the drying up of the fountain doth the drying up of the streams.

(1.) The state the fountain of sin is in believers, "Our old man is crucified with him." This supposeth that Christ was crucified; that in believers there is a twofold man, a new man, and an old; for while he saith, "our old man," he intimates that the old man is not the whole man, as in the unregenerate. The new man is the new creature of grace in the believer, or he as renewed. The old man is the corruption of nature, or he as unrenewed. This old man is the fountain of sin in his heart and life.

Now, the state it is in is a state of crucifixion; it is nailed to the cross, which is a state of death. And us crucifixion is a concrucifixion with Christ, Galatians 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ." In so far as the believer is by faith united to Christ, his old man is nailed to the cross of Christ, to fare here as Christ fared: and that was heavy fare.

(2.) The issue of this state of the fountain of sin in believers. It is twofold.

1st, The final issue, "That the body of sin might be destroyed." The old man is the body of sin, being a complication of the several sinful lusts opposite to the holy law, as the body is of members competent to the human frame. Now, the final issue of this state of the old man, the body of sin, is its destruction and utter ruin. Crucifixion is not present death indeed, but it is sure and certain death. Pilate would have "chastised Christ, and released him," Luke 23:16. but the Jews would have him crucified, for that would carry him quite away from among them: even so the old man' is not to be corrected and amended, but destroyed quite and clean.

2dly, The intermediate issue, "That henceforth we should not serve sin;" that from the moment of our union with Christ we should not serve sin any more, voluntarily living in it, and giving up ourselves to it as its servants, to live and act for satisfying it, as we did before. The old man may live long on the cross before he be destroyed: but then his hands and feet cannot serve him as

they did before, there are nails driven through them; he may more them indeed, but then it is with pain and difficulty. So was it with Christ; he behoved to recommend his mother to the care of his beloved disciple John, for that his own hands and feet were not at liberty to act and go for her as formerly.

2. The certainty concerning this ground, “Knowing this.” It is not a matter of uncertain hope, but known for truth. It could not be known by sense; no bodily eye could discern our old man on the cross with Christ: nor yet by rational deduction from natural principles; for the whole mystery of Christ is supernatural. Therefore it is known by faith upon divine testimony; it is a conclusion of faith to be laid down for invigorating us in all our endeavours after holiness of life, and to be firmly held and stuck by in all our struggles with the old man, as ever we would desire to make head against him. That I may touch the several purposes of this text, I shall offer them in several doctrines to be briefly handled.

DOCTRINE I. “There is in believers united to Christ a new man, a holy principle; and an old man, a fountain of sin.

I. Why the holy principle and the corrupt nature in believers are called the new and old man?

1. They are called men, because each of them possesseth the whole man, though not wholly. There are by their means two I’s in every believer, Romans 7:15. “For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I.” There is not one part of the man that is in Christ, but grace has a part of it, and corruption has a part of it: as in the twilight there is light over all, and darkness over all too, the darkness being mixed in every part with the light. So my renewed part is I, a man having an understanding enlightened, a will renewed, affections spiritualized, using my body conformably: but my unrenewed part is I too, having an understanding darkened, a will rebellious, affections corrupted, and using my body accordingly.

2. They are called the new and old man, for two reasons.

(1.) Because the new nature is brought in upon the corrupt principle, which was the first possessor. The corrupt nature is of the same standing with ourselves from the conception and birth, and possessed us alone till our union with Christ by faith. And then only came in the new nature, and that made the former old.

(2.) Because of their different originals; the one being in us from the corrupt first Adam, the other from the holy second Adam. So the believer, looking on the corruption of his nature, may call fallen Adam father; and on the new creature in him, he may call Christ father. The second Adam coming after the first, made the first old: so the produce of them in us is the old and new man accordingly.

II. How the believer comes to be thus split in two, two men. This is done by virtue of his union with Christ, from whence ariseth a communication of grace to him from Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:30. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Concerning which two things are to be noted.

1. That in the moment of one’s union with Christ by faith, there is communicated to him, out of the fulness of grace in the man Christ, a measure of every grace in him, as the wax impressed receives every point in the seal, John 1:16. “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Ephesians 4:13. “Till we all come — unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of

Christ." And thus is the new creature formed, being a new man perfect in parts, entire or having all its members, no grace totally wanting.

Hence it is that the new man is formed immediately after Christ's image, so that it is the very picture of the man Christ, as Eve was of Adam. Therefore the forming of it is said to be the forming of Christ in the believer, Galatians 4:19.

2. That yet there is not then, nor during this life, communicated to the believer a full measure of any grace, 1 Corinthians 13:9. "For we know in part." So all the graces being imperfect, though they remove sin as far as they go, they cannot fill up the room in any part, mind, will, or affections. And thus is there an old man left in the believer still, Romans 7:14. which is the image of the first Adam, from whom the corruption composing it is derived.

USE 1. Hence see, that the believer's life while here cannot miss to be a struggling life, Galatians 5:17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The believer is like Rebekah in another case, the two men struggle in him; and like the two armies in the Shulamite.

2. See here the rise of the peace and easy life of it most men have. The flesh in them has no competitor. In the state of glory, grace has all, so there is a perfect peace: in the state of nature, corruption has all; so there is peace too; except what is marred by the struggle between the flesh in one part lusting, and the flesh in another part fearing, as in Balaam, 2 Peter 2:15. "who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Compared with Numbers 22:18. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Whereas the struggle in the believer is betwixt the flesh and Spirit in the same part willing, and willing the same thing of their proper motion, Romans 7:15-16. forecited.

DOCT. II. The old man in believers is a body of sin, an entire body, lacking none of its members, Romans 7:24. "O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This appears from the account of it already given. As we derive every grace from the second Adam in our regeneration, so every corruption from the first Adam in our natural generation.

USE 1. This may serve to humble believers, when they are at their best. There is an entire body of sin in them while they are here. Do they excel in any grace? yet there is in them a member of the old man opposite to it, as passion in meek Moses. Have they every grace in them? They have every corruption too, though every one does not appear, more than every grace. Therefore they have need to watch against all sill whatsoever; for there is never a snare in the ill world but there is a member of the old man ready to fall in with it, Colossians 3:5. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness," &c.

2. No wonder the believer groans being burdened, having a whole body of sin carrying about with him. And they that groan not under it are certainly all flesh; no new man in them. If ye belong to Christ ye cannot want an errand to him for sanctification. Ye have a body of sin to lay before him, which he alone can destroy.

DOCT. III. The old man in believers is crucified with Christ. This bears two things.

I. Christ was crucified. He not only died for us, but died for us the cursed, painful, shameful, lingering death on the tree of the cross; which we are met to commemorate. Christ was put to this

death for us, rather than another kind of death.

1st, That the first sin that let in all sin into the world might be the more clearly read in the punishment. When ye consider the awful and tremendous dispensation of the Son of God, the second Adam, hanging naked on a tree, and dying there at great leisure in exquisite pain, can ye miss to see the fiery wrath of God against the sin of that naked pair in paradise, pleasuring themselves in the fruit of the forbidden tree, and in an instant defacing the image of God in them?

2dly, That the whole world might see what a low and hard state Christ took on him, putting himself in our room. We were bond-men under the curse, and Christ took on him our state of servitude, and that under the curse becoming a bond-man for us under the curse, Php 2:7. “He took upon him the form of a servant.” Hereof the death on the cross was tile sign and badge, being the punishment of slaves, and accursed in the law. And to make way for this circumstance, the Jews were subjected to the Romans.

USE 1. Remember a crucified Christ, enter this night deep into the thought of the Son of God hanging, groaning, dying on a cross for us. Admire the matchless love in it. Behold the severity of divine justice against sin in it. Prize the salvation so dearly bought, and receive it with thankfulness.

2. Think not strange, if ye have a crucified life in the world. If ye are Christians, followers of Jesus, why should ye think strange of it, to be thus conformed to your head?

II. The old man in believers is crucified together with him. Here we are to inquire how it is crucified with him; which take in the following particulars.

1 Christ hung on the cross as a public person, a representative of his spiritual seed. For he was the second Adam suffering, as the other the first Adam sinning. So that as they sinned in Adam, they suffered in Christ; the law having them all on the cross in Christ their representative, Galatians 2:20. “I am crucified with Christ.”

2. Christ hanging on the cross had the body of all their sins upon him, your old man, and my old man. They were on him by the imputation of the guilt of them, though not inherent in him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Therefore our old man is said to be crucified, not in him, but with him.

3. While he was hanging on the cross, he was meritoriously doing away the guilt of them, and consequently the power, pollution, and very being thereof; inasmuch as the guilt being removed, these must cease of course. For the strength of sin is the law, whereby it stakes down the sinner under the curse, 1 Corinthians 15:56.

4. The sinner being united to Christ by faith, the merit and virtue, of Christ’s suffering on the cross is actually applied to him. So that, his guilt being removed, there is a reigning principle of grace planted in him, going through the whole man, whereby the dominion of sin is broken, Romans 6:14 and the pollution removed so far as that new man goes, Titus 3:5. So that the believer is an image of Christ on the cross, full of grace in him, and of sin on him; but the former working off the latter.

USE 1. See then, O communicants, that the crucifying of the old man, the body of sin in you, depends entirely on your uniting with. Christ by faith. The sacrament is appointed to seal and strengthen that union. Therefore your great business at the table should be, closely to knit with a crucified Christ. The more of that, the more will the death of sin be hastened on. And they that aim not at the destruction of sin in their communicating, while they pretend to remember a crucified Saviour, forget the end of his crucifixion, viz, that the body of sin, being crucified with him, might be destroyed.

2. The old man in believers is in a state of death, though not dead outright. It is crucified with Christ. It may move and stir in them, and vehement struggles it may make, as a dying man struggling with the mortal disease: but whatever efforts it make, it is on the cross, whence it shall not come down till it breathe out its last.

3. The practice of religion is painful work; and Christians must not think it strange, that oft-times they are pained to the heart in it. The saints in glory have no pain in their work; for the old man is destroyed in them: but the saints here have an unrenewed part; and that is on the cross, and cannot but pain them. There are right eyes in them to be plucked out; the man has a painful struggle in denying himself, crossing his own inclinations, wrestling against his own flesh and blood. Providence thrusts a spear into the old man's side, by piercing trials and troubles; it breaks his legs by cutting disappointments from many airths, to forward his death. This cannot be bat painful.

4. The old man is long a-dying out; for crucifying is a lingering death. There must be an exercise of patience in the Christian course; for there may be many a battle ere the complete victory be got. Many a wound the old man will take ere he fall; and after he is worsted again and again, he will get up and renew the battle, till he get the final stroke from the Lord's immediate hand.

It is a grave question, Why doth the Lord suffer the old man of sin to dwell in his people after their conversion? Why is not sin quite expelled at the first entry of grace? Our text affords one weighty reason for it, viz, that the members may be conformed to the head. Christ did not put off the body of our sins, that by imputation lay on him, at his very first encounter with it: nay, he had a grievous struggle with it for the space of three hours on the cross, till he himself got the first fall, dying by its hand on the cross. Nay, if we reckon rightly, it lay heavy on him the space of thirty-three years; only upon the cross was the heat of the battle, which ended in his death and burial, whereby he put it off quite and clean. So, since imputed sin was on Christ the head all his life, inherent sin is left in believers, the members, all their life. The old man is crucified with him.

DOCTRINE IV. By virtue of the cross of Christ, the old, man in believers shall certainly be destroyed quite and clean at length. Here we may inquire,

I. What destruction is that that is certainly abiding the old man in believers? It is an utter destruction of it, with all effects of it, all marks and vestiges of it, all belonging with it to the old Adam.

1. The old man himself shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed, out of all that are Christ's; so that though he has many a time trode them like a field of battle, there shall not be in them the least print of his feet to be discerned, Hebrews 12:23. "The spirits of just men made perfect." The day will come, when there shall not be the least guilt of it on them, to draw a frown from their Father's

face against them, (Isaiah 33:1-24. ult. “The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity”); when it shall have no power to prevail over them’ in the least: nay, when it shall no more have an indwelling in them, Hebrews 12:23. forecited; but shall be utterly cast forth as an abominable branch. So the new man shall possess all alone, without a competitor for ever.

2. The sinful vile body derived from old Adam, which brought him down from Adam to us, Leviticus 5:1-19. and continues to the end the best friend he has in believers, shall be destroyed for his sake. The soul shall leave the sinful flesh to be carried into the grave, where it shall rot and consume, till it return to the dust again, so as not the least lineament of old Adam’s image or likeness shall be discerned on it. And Christ will take the same dust thus purified, and form it anew after his own likeness as second Adam, Php 3:21.

3. The visible heavens that covered him, and this earth that bore him, and furnished fuel to his lusts, shall for his sake be set on flames, and reduced to ashes, 2 Peter 3:10. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall molt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” Compare Genesis 3:17. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” So that it shall no more for ever be to be said, There is the earth where the old man some time lived, and there the’ heavens that gave him light and air. But Christ will make new heavens and a new earth for the new man, 2 Peter 3:13. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

4. Lastly, All that shall remain of him shall be buried in hell, Revelation 20:14. “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.” Old Adam brought in the old man into the world, and he spread his poisonous efficacy over all: so that look where ye will, ye shall not see in all this world that in which there is not sin, or some effect of sin. But then all shall be gathered from off believers, and from off the now groaning creatures, and cast into the lake of fire; so that there shall not be the `least sin, nor effect of sin, without the boundaries of hell.

II. When will the old man be thus destroyed? You will easily conceive, from what is said, that destruction will have two periods.

1. At the death of the believer, and not till then. Till then the child of God must wrestle on with it; for so did Christ with it as imputed to him, till death set him, free. It is a grave question, how come believers to die being freed from the curse of the covenant of works? ANSWER. They die in conformity to Christ their head; that as death came in by sin, sin may go off by death. It is not dying that does it indeed; for sin goes through death in them that are out of Christ, not moved from off them for all that death can do. But at death, Christ gives the redding stroke betwixt the new and old man, kills the old man outright, as 2 Samuel 1:10. And he does it, by letting in a full measure of every grace from himself into the believer, which takes up the whole man wholly; and so the old man is’ gone in a moment, as the darkness upon the sun’s displaying his beams over all.

2. At the end of the world. Then comes the utter abolition of all vestiges of it out of hell.

III. The certainty of it. It is even as sure as the death of Christ could merit its destruction, and as the end of his death cannot be frustrated, and as he rose again from the dead free from the imputed guilt of it, and sits in heaven to-day without sin so much as imputed to him.

USE. Let the saints then take courage, and renew the battle vigorously with the old man; for the victory will undoubtedly fall to their side. And as for you that are still for keeping the old man's head and heart hale; as ye do interpretatively desire none of Christ's cross, it is an argument ye have as little saving interest in it.

DOCTRINE V. In the meantime, till the old man be destroyed quite and clean by virtue of the cross of Christ, by virtue of the same cross the believer shall not be a servant to the old man more. That is the present piece of freedom from it the believer has.

1. The believer has heartily given up with him for a master. Some time he said, as Exodus 21:5. "I love my master, — I will not go out free." But now he hates him mortally, and would fain be altogether free at any rate, Romans 7:24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The very being in the house with the old man is a burden.

2. He will get no work, but forced work, off his hand more, Romans 7:15. "For that which I do, I allow not," &c. He will not yield his members to the old man voluntarily, as before, Romans 6:13. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." He will never get work with whole good will at his hand more, but half will at most.

USE. This writes death to such as have given their hand to Christ at his table, and are ready to go back into the service of their lusts. If from henceforth ye enter not into a struggling life against sin, ye have not felt the virtue of Christ's cross.

DOCTRINE VI. ult. Believers should go out against the old man in acts of holiness, in the faith that he is a crucified man; i.e. Believe your old: man is crucified with Christ, and in this belief bestir yourself against him in the use of appointed means. If you believe it not, how can your hands be strong, having all to do yourself alone? But believe it firmly, and it will make you as a giant refreshed with wine.

Author

Born into relative obscurity in 1676 in Duns, Berwickshire, Thomas Boston died in 1732 in the small parish of Ettrick in the Scottish Borders. But his 56 years of life, 45 of them spent in conscious Christian discipleship, lend credibility to the spiritual principle that it is not where a Christian serves, but what quality of service he renders, that really counts.

It is as a loving, faithful, rigorously self-disciplined Christian pastor, and one deeply committed to the grace of God, that Boston is best remembered. Leaving his first charge at Simprin (where he served 1699-1707), he settled in Ettrick for a 25-year ministry that saw the number of communicants rise from 60 (in 1710) to 777 (in 1731). Constantly taught them in season and out of season, in pulpit and in home.

Chapter 125

S. The Properties Of God's Decrees Explained

The Properties Of God’s Decrees Explained by Thomas Boston

1. They are eternal. God makes no decrees in time, but they were all from eternity. So the decree of election is said to have been "before the foundation of the world," Ephesians 1:4, "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," Indeed, whatever he does in time, was decreed by him, seeing it was known to him before time, Acts 15:18, "Known to God from eternity are all His works." And this foreknowledge is founded on the decree. If the divine decrees were not eternal, God would not be most perfect and unchangeable. Weak like man, he would have to change his plans and would be unable to tell every thing that would to come to pass.

2. They are most wise, "according to the counsel of his will." God cannot properly deliberate or take counsel, as men do; for he sees all things together and at once. And thus his decrees are made with perfect judgment, and laid in the depth of wisdom, Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" So that nothing is determined that could have been better determined.

3. They are most free, according to the counsel of his own will; depending on no other, but all flowing from the mere pleasure of his own will, Romans 11:34, "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" Whatsoever he decrees to work outside of himself is from his free choice. So his decrees are all absolute, and there are none of them conditional. He has made no decrees suspended on any condition outside himself. Neither has he decreed any thing because he saw it would come to pass, or as that which would come to pass on such or such conditions; for then they should be no more according to the counsel of his will, but the creature’s will.

God’s decrees being eternal, they cannot depend upon a condition which is temporal. They are the determinate counsels of God, but a conditional decree determines nothing. Such conditional decrees are inconsistent with the infinite wisdom of God, and are in men only the effects of weakness; and they are inconsistent with the independence of God, making them depend on the creature.

4. They are unchangeable. They are the unalterable laws of heaven. God’s decrees are constant; and he by no means alters his purpose, as men do. Psalms 33:11, "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations." Hence they are compared to mountains of brass, Zechariah 6:1. As nothing can escape his first view, so nothing can be added to his knowledge. Hence Balaam said, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" Numbers 23:19. The decree of election is irreversible: "The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," 2 Timothy 2:19

5. They are most holy and pure. For as the sun darts its beams upon a dunghill, and yet is no way defiled by it; so God decrees the permission of sin, yet is not the author of sin: 1 John 1:5. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." James 1:13, "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone," and James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

6. They are effective; that is, whatsoever God decrees, comes to pass infallibly, Isaiah 46:10 "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." He cannot fall short of what he has determined. Yet the liberty of second causes is not hereby taken away; for the decree of God offers no violence to the creature’s will; as appears from the free and unforced actions of Joseph’s brethren, Pharaoh, the Jews that crucified Christ, etc. Nor does it take away the contingency of second causes, either in themselves or as to us, as appears by the lot cast into the lap. Nay, they are thereby established, because he hath efficaciously foreordained that such effects shall follow on such causes.

S. The Purpose of God's Decrees

The Purpose of God’s Decrees by Thomas Boston And this is no other than his own glory. Every rational agent acts for an end; and God being the most perfect agent, and his glory the highest end, there can be no doubt but all his decrees are directed to that end. Romans 11:36, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever." "that we....should be to the praise of His glory," Ephesians 1:12 In all, he aims at his glory; and seeing he aims at it, he gets it even from the most sinful actions he has decreed to permit. Either the glory of his mercy or of his justice is drawn from them. Infinite wisdom directs all to the end intended. More particularly, God Glorified in the Creation of the World

1. This was God’s purpose in the creation of the world. The divine perfections are admirably glorified here, not only in regard of the greatness of the effect, which comprehends the heavens and the earth, and all things in them; but in regard of the marvellous way of its production. For he made the vast universe without the concurrence of any material cause; he brought it forth from the womb of nothing by an act of his efficacious will. And as he began the creation by proceeding from nothing to real existence, so in forming the other parts he drew them from infirm and inert matter, as from a second nothing, that all his creatures might bear the signatures of infinite power. Thus he commanded light to arise out of darkness, and sensible creatures from an insensible element. The lustre of the divine glory appears eminently here. Hence David says, Psalms 19:1. "The heavens declare the glory of God." They declare and manifest to the world the attributes and perfections of their great Creator, even in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. All the creatures have some prints of God stamped upon them, whereby they loudly proclaim and show to the world his wisdom and goodness in framing them. Hence says Paul, Romans 1:20, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

God Glorified in the Creation of Men and Angels

2. The glory of God was his chief purpose and design in making men and angels. The rest of the creatures glorified God in a passive way, as they are evidences and manifestations of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But this higher rank of beings are endowed with rational faculties, and so are capable to glorify God actively. Hence it is said, Proverbs 16:4, "The LORD has made all for Himself" If all things were made for him, then man and angels especially, who are the masterpieces of the whole creation. We have our source and being from the pure fountain of God’s infinite power and goodness; and therefore we ought to run towards that again, till we empty all our faculties and excellencies into that same ocean of divine goodness.

God Glorified in Election and Predestination

3. This is likewise the end of election and predestination. For "having predestined us....to the praise of the glory of His grace," Ephesians 1:5-6. That some are ordained to eternal life, and others passed by, and suffered to perish eternally in their sin, is for the manifestation of the infinite

perfections and excellencies of God. The glory and beauty of the divine attributes is displayed here with a shining lustre; as his sovereign authority and dominion over all his creatures to dispose of them to what ends and purposes he pleases; his knowledge and omniscience, in beholding all things past, present, and to come; his vindictive justice, in ordaining punishments to men, as a just retribution for sin; and his omnipotence, in making good his word, and putting all his threatenings in execution. The glory of his goodness shines likewise here, in making choice of any, when all most justly deserved to be rejected. And his mercy shines here with an beautiful lustre, in receiving and admitting all who believe in Jesus into his favour.

God Glorified in the Work of Redemption

4. This was the purpose that God proposed in that great and astonishing work of redemption. In our redemption by Christ, we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of his glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here. Indeed the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and reveal one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. His truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory. This is the goal that God proposed in their conversion and regeneration. Hence it is said, Isaiah 43:21, "This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise." Sinners are adopted into God’s family, and made a royal priesthood according to this very design, 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

S. The Scope of the Scriptures

THE SCOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

1 Timothy 1:13.--Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love. IN these words there is, (1.) The character of scripture doctrine; it is sound words; sound and pure in itself, and sound in its effects, being of a soul-healing virtue, Ezekiel 47:9. (2.) The sum of it, faith, showing what we are to believe; and love, what we are to do, 3 John 1:14-15. This love has a particular relation to Christ, all our obedience being to be offered unto God through him, as our faith fixes on God through him. This was what the apostle preached. (3.) Our duty with respect to it; to hold fast the form of sound words. This signifies, [1.] To have a pattern of the doctrine in our minds, to which all that ministers teach must be conformable. [2.] To hold it fast; to cleave to, and keep hold of it, without flinching from it, whatever dangers or difficulties may attend the doing so. Both these senses are implied in the words. The text affords the following doctrinal proposition.

Doct. " The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." As to the matter of scripture-doctrine,

1. Some things are taught in the scriptures less principally; that is, the main design of the scriptures is not to teach these things; neither are they taught for themselves, but for the respect they have to other things. Thus in the scripture we may learn the knowledge of several natural things, as of the nature of some trees, birds, beasts, &c. of husbandry, the customs of several nations, especially of the Jews, &c. But these and such like things are only taught in the scripture, as having some respect to our faith and obedience. So the vine tree is described, Ezekiel 15:1-8. to hold forth the uselessness of barren professors, &c. However, whatsoever is taught in the scriptures, seeing the scripture is God’s word, is all to be received by divine faith, though all scripture-truths are not of equal importance.

2. The scripture teaches some things chiefly. and these are faith and obedience. These are the two parts of the doctrine of the Bible. Whatsoever concerns religion, or the salvation of souls, in the Old and New Testament, may be reduced to one of these two heads: It is either an article of faith, or a point of obedience.

Here I shall consider, 1. The nature of faith and obedience, and the connection betwixt the two.

2. The manner of the scripture’s teaching.

3. The sense of scripture.

4. Show that the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures is the supreme judge of controversies in religion.

1. Let us consider the nature of that faith and obedience which the scripture teaches, with the connection betwixt the two. First, As to faith. Divine faith is a believing of what God has revealed, because God has said it, or revealed it. People may believe scripture-truths, but not with a divine

faith, unless they believe it on that very ground, the authority of God speaking in his word. And this divine faith is the product of the Spirit of God in the heart of a sinner, implanting the habit or principle of faith there, and exciting it to a hearty reception and firm belief of whatever God reveals in his word. And the faith which the scripture teaches is what a man is to believe concerning God. This may be reduced to four heads: What God is, the persons in the Godhead, the decrees of God relating to every thing that comes to pass, and the execution of them in his works of creation and providence. Now, though the works of creation and providence show that there is a God, yet that fundamental truth, that God is, and the doctrines relating to the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence, God's acts and purposes, the creation of all things, the state of man at his creation, his fall, and his recovery by the mediation and satisfaction of Christ, are only to be learned from the holy scriptures. Hence we may infer,

1. That there can be no right knowledge of God acquired in an ordinary way without the scriptures, Matthew 22:29. "Ye do err (said Christ to the Sadducees), not knowing the scriptures." As there must be a dark night where the light is gone, so those places of the earth must needs be dark, and without the saving knowledge of God, that want the scriptures. Thus the Apostle tells the Ephesians, that, before they were visited with the light of the gospel, they were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12.

2. That where the scriptures are not known, there can be no saving faith. For, says the apostle, Romans 10:14-15, Romans 10:17. 'How 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, except they be sent as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things ! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

3. That there is nothing we are bound to believe as a part of faith but what the scripture teaches, be who they will that propose it, and whatever they may pretend for their warrant. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because their is no light in them,' Isaiah 8:20. No man must be our master in these things: 'For one is our master, even Christ,' Matthew 23:10. He is Lord of our faith, and we are bound to believe whatever he has revealed in his word.

Secondly, As to obedience, it is that duty which God requires of man. It is that duty and obedience which man owes to God, to his will and laws, in respect of God's universal supremacy and sovereign authority over man; and which he should render to him out of love and gratitude. The scriptures are the holy oracle from whence we are to learn our duty, Psalms 19:11. 'By them is thy servant warned,' says David. The Bible is the light we are to take heed to, that we may know how to steer our course, and order the several steps of our life. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path,' says the Psalmist, Psalms 119:105. From whence we may infer.

1. That there can be no sufficient knowledge of the duty which we owe to God without the scriptures. Though the light of nature does in some measure show our duty to God, yet it is too dim to take up the will of God sufficiently in order to salvation.

2. That there can be no right obedience yielded to God without them. Men that walk in the dark must needs stumble; and the works that are wrought in the dark will never abide the light; for there is no working rightly by guess in this matter. All proper obedience to God must be learned from the scriptures.

3. That there is no point of duty that we are called to, but what the scripture teaches, Isaiah 8:20. forecited. Men must neither make duties to themselves, or others, but what God has made duty. The law of God is exceeding broad, and reaches the whole conversation of man, outward and inward, Psalms 19:1-14; and man is bound to conform himself to it alone as the rule of his duty.

Thirdly, As to the connection of these two, faith and obedience are joined together, because there is no true faith but what is followed with obedience, and no true obedience but what flows from faith. Faith is the loadstone of obedience, and obedience the touch stone of faith, as appears from James 2:1-26. They that want faith cannot be holy; and they that have true faith, their faith will work by love. Hence we may see,

1. That faith is the foundation of duty or obedience, and not obedience or duty the foundation of faith, Titus 3:8. and that the things to be believed are placed before the things to be practised, in order to distinguish between the order of things in the covenant of grace, and that they were under the covenant works. Under the letter, doing, or perfect obedience to the law, was the foundation of the promised privilege of life; but under the former, the promise is to be believed, and the promised life is to be freely received: and thereupon follows the believer's obedience to the law, out of gratitude and love for the mercy received. This appears from the order laid down by God himself in delivering the moral law from mount Sinai. He lays the foundation of faith, first of all, in these words, 'I am the Lord thy God,' &c. which is the sum and substance of the covenant of grace; and then follows the law of the ten commandments, which is as it were grafted upon this declaration of sovereign grace and love, Exodus 20:2-18. And let it be remembered, that the apostle Paul calls gospel-obedience the obedience of faith as springing from and founded upon faith, and if we examine the order of doctrine laid down in all his epistles, we shall find, that he first propounds the doctrine of faith, or what man is to believe, and upon that foundation inculcates the duties that are to be practised.

2. That all works without faith are dead, and so cannot please God. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and without or separate from Christ we can do nothing. Faith is the principle of all holy and acceptable obedience.

3. That those who inculcate moral duties without discovering the necessity of regeneration, and union with Christ, as the source of all true obedience, are foolish builders; they lay their foundation on the sand, and the superstructure they raise will soon be overturned; and they pervert the gospel of Christ. Such would do well to consider what the apostle says, Galatians 1:9. 'If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed.

2. I proceed now to consider the manner of the scripture's teaching.

1. The scripture teaches some things expressly in so many words; as, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' &c. Other things it teaches by good and necessary consequence; as, that infants are to be baptized. Now, whatever can be proved by just and necessary consequence from sacred writ, is all one, as to the binding power on men's.

consciences, as if it were taught there in so many words, whether it be in points of faith or obedience.

2. The scriptures teach but externally. It is the Spirit that teaches internally. The scriptures externally reveal what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man; but the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the scriptures, for several reasons which I mentioned in the former discourse, and shall not now repeat.

3. I come now to consider the sense of the scripture. 1. The sense of the scripture is but one, and not manifold. There may be several parts of that one sense subordinate one to another; as some prophecies have a respect to the deliverance from Babylon, the spiritual by Christ, and the eternal in heaven; and some passages have one thing that is typical of another: yet these are but one full sense, only that may be of two sorts; one is simple, and another compound. Some scriptures have only a simple sense, containing a declaration of one thing only; and that is either proper or figurative. A proper sense is that which arises from the words taken properly, and the figurative from the words taken figuratively. Some have a simple proper sense, as, 'God is a Spirit, God created the heavens and the earth;' which are to be understood according to the propriety of the words. Some have a simple figurative sense; as, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,' &c. These have but one simple sense; but then it is the figurative, and is not to be understood according to the propriety of the words, as if Christ were a tree, &c. Thus you see what the simple sense is. The compound or mixed sense is found wherein one thing is held forth as a type of the other; and so it consists of two parts, the one respecting the type, the other the antitype; which are not two senses, but two parts of that one and entire sense intended by the Holy Ghost: e. g. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to it and be healed. The full sense of which is, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that, &c. even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Here is a literal and mystical sense, which make up one full sense betwixt them. Those scriptures that have this compound sense are sometimes fulfilled properly (or literally, as it is taken in opposition to figuratively) in the type and antitype both; as Hosea 11:1. "I have called my Son out of Egypt, which was literally true both of Israel and Christ. Sometimes figuratively in the type, and properly in the antitype, as Psalms 69:21. 'They gave me vinegar to drink.' Sometimes properly in the type, and figuratively in the antitype, as Psalms 2:9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.' Compare 2 Samuel 12:31. Sometimes figuratively in both, as Psalms 41:9. 'Yea mine own familiar friend--hath lifted up his heel against me;' which is meant of Ahitophel and Judas. Now the sense of the scripture must be but one, and not manifold, that is, quite different and no wise subordinate one to another, because of the unity of truth, and because of the perspicuity of the scripture.

2. Where there is a question about the true sense of scripture, it must be found out what it is by searching other places that speak more clearly, the scripture itself being the infallible rule of interpreting scripture. Now that it is so, appears from the following arguments.

(1.) The Holy Spirit gives this as a rule, 2 Peter 1:20-21. After the apostle had called the Christians to take heed to the scripture, he gives them this rule for understanding it, 'knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, of our own exposition. For the prophecy

came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As it came; so it is to be expounded: but it came not by the will of man; therefore we are not to rest on men for the sense of it, but holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and so never erring; therefore we are to look to the dictates of the same Spirit in other places.

(2.) There are several approved examples of this, comparing one scripture with another, to find out the meaning of the Holy Ghost; as Acts 15:15. 'And to this agree the words of the prophet,' &c. The Bereans are commended for this, Acts 17:11. Yea, Christ himself makes use of this to show the true sense of the scripture against the devil, Matthew 4:6. 'Cast thyself down, (said that wicked spirit): for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c. Matthew 4:7. "It is written again, (says Christ), Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And thus our Lord makes out the true sense of that scripture, that it is to be understood only with respect to them who do not cast themselves on a tempting of God. Some more will occur concerning this point under the next head. This then is the great, chief, and infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, to compare one passage with another. Other things may be added as helps and means in order to find out the true sense.

1. The knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek, in which languages the prophets and apostles wrote, is an excellent mean to the right understanding of the scriptures. These original tongues are the best commentaries on scripture; and many times it is found so by those that know them.

2. Diligently consider the scope and design of the Holy Ghost in the portion of scripture where ye find difficulty the coherence and context, with all circumstances going before and following.

3. Distinguish proper from improper words. The scripture frequently uses improper and figurative expressions, which, if taken as the letters sound, will found a very absurd sense.

4. The commentaries of godly and learned writers are not to be neglected.

5. The reading also of profane history is of notable use in the knowledge of the prophetical writings. And the knowledge of the Jewish customs brings great light to the scriptures.

6. Lastly, Always take heed to the analogy of faith, and see there be no deviating therefrom: for the Spirit of God speaking in the scripture is always one and the same; and therefore we are never to think that one scripture can be contrary to another, or the known doctrine of the Bible and the form of sound words; e. g. 'This is my body which is broken for you;' it cannot be so understood as if Christ's body were locally present in the sacrament; because we believe, according to the constant doctrine of scripture, that Christ is ascended into heaven, and will come again at the last day; and till then the heavens must contain him. So we must not take the words literally, when it is contrary to modesty, as when Isaiah is bid go naked, Isaiah 20:2.; or to piety, to cut off the right hand, &c. More particularly,

1. Go to God for his Spirit to teach you, Psalms 119:18. It is Christ's work to give people to understand the scriptures. If you would know what Paul says, pray for the spirit by which he wrote.

2. Take heed of a carnal, earthly, and fleshly mind. When the heart is carnal, the mind is much blinded, and so utterly unfit for searching the scriptures.

3. Endeavour to be exercised unto godliness. An exercised frame proves sometimes an excellent commentator.

4. Lastly, Endeavour to practise what you know.

4. I proceed to show that the spirit of God speaking in scripture is the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest. This is a very important point, and upon it depends the whole of religion. One man says so, another man says otherwise: the question is, Who shall be judge, and to whose determination are we to stand and acquiesce in? Four sundry ways do men go here.

First, Enthusiasts set up the private spirit, and its revelations, without the Spirit, for the judge of controversies. But whatever these may pretend, the scripture is our only rule. For,

1. Whatever revelation or light men may pretend to, God binds them and us to the written word, Isaiah 8:20. 'If they speak not according to the scriptures,' it is not true light, but 'because there is no light in them,' that makes it so: for going against the word, they show themselves to be acted with a spirit of delusion, 1 John 4:6.

2. The Apostle Paul devotes them to a curse, though they were angels, who preach any other gospel than what he preached, and the Galatians received from his hand, Galatians 1:8-9; not only a gospel contrary to it, but another, anything diverse from or besides it, though not contrary to it. And if it be contrary the Spirit is contrary to himself, for he is the author of the scriptures.

3. We are commanded to 'try the spirits,' 1 John 4:1. Now, how must they be tried but by a rule; and what rule have we to try them by but the written word'? This was the rule which the Bereans made use of to try the spirit of the apostles, for which they are highly commended. It is that rule which Christ sends the Pharisees to try his own doctrine by, John 5:40. But by the scriptures we cannot try the spirits, unless we lay them to that rule, and observe whether or not the spirits speak as the scriptures do; and then how can the new revelations be received?

4. The spirit's revelations are either a complete or partial rule. If our complete rule, then the scriptures are useless which is blasphemous, and contrary to all those commands that requires us to give attendance to the reading, searching, &c. of them. If they be a partial rule only, then they either teach according to the scripture, or not. If according to it, then it is no new revelation, but what the scripture already affords us. If not, it is because there is no light in them, Isaiah 8:20. There is one scripture that me must more narrowly inquire into, both because it is abused by the adversaries in this point, and affords us an argument for our doctrine, The passage is, 2 Peter 1:19. 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' Enthusiasts here, by the day-star arising in the heart, understand some extraordinary revelation and light which God sets up in the soul, which when it is set up, the person is to take heed to the written word no longer. But, (1.) Whither would these men drive us? They tell us, that all men have a light within them, according to which they must walk; and this is the spirit within us; yet; must we still expect a new light to turn us off from the scriptures; (2.) The apostle here plainly prefers the word of prophecy unto an immediate voice from heaven, and that in the very same thing wherein they both agree: how much more preferable is the scripture to new revelations? (3.) This

supposes, that the apostles and believers in those days had not this light; for they say, 'We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.' This being so, we envy not the Quakers their light, which the apostles and these Christians were strangers to.

Some by the day dawning and the day-star arising understand the more clear dispensation which they suppose is to come in the latter days. Others understand by it the sight of God and Christ in glory, till which time the scriptures must be made use of, but no longer. Others understand this as spoken to the believing Jews in reference to the prophets of the Old Testament, to which they did well to take heed, till their gospel light should shine more clearly. Some say, the word until is not to be taken exclusively of the time following that dawning of the day, and day star arising; and thereby understand simply more clear light arising after some darkness, which the people of God may be in for a time; till which light arising they are to take heed to the scriptures; not that they are then to give over taking heed to them. Laying aside that which relates to a more clear dispensation yet to come, because it supposes that then the scriptures must be laid aside, which is very contrary to the scripture, for the Spirit shall never in this life justle out the word, but his office is to teach, not new things unwritten, but whatever Christ spoke to his disciples: 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance, (says he), whatsoever I have said unto you,' John 14:26: Laying aside that, it is hard to determine which of the rest is indeed the true meaning of the apostle. Only it seems to bid fairest for the apostle's sense, to say, that he speaks of the more clear knowledge of Christ which the believers at that time were afterwards to have, till which time they did well to take heed to the prophetical word, as it is in the Greek; that is, to the doctrine of the prophets who prophesied of Christ; not that they were then to lay by the use of the prophets, but that then they would be of less use to them than before, when they should attain to a more clear gospel-light; as the candle is of less use when the day dawns than it was before, though it be still useful. and I think it abundantly plain, that the word of prophecy is not here to be understood generally of the whole scripture, as the other interpretations seem to take it, but particularly of the doctrine of the prophets concerning Christ and the gospel, as appears from the phrase, the prophetic word, and the first verse of the following chapter, where he speaks of false prophets that were among the people of the Jews. So by the day-star I understand Christ himself, who is called the morning star, Revelation 22:16· It is true it is here Pharphoros, but there oster ormithes: but, for ought I know, the first of these is, apax legomenon; and though the words be different, the sense is the same, one thing gets but different names. And Christ is called the day-star or morning-star, which we know are both one thing; because, (1.) As the morning star is the most eminent among the stars, and most lucid, as appears by its shining when the appearance of the sun makes the rest disappear; so there is none like Christ among the sons, Song of Solomon 2:3. (2.) As the day-star puts an end to the dark night, so doth Christ's arising in the soul put an end to the night of spiritual darkness. Never was the sight of the day-star so refreshful to the weary traveller in the night, as Christ's appearance in and to the soul; only the apostle calls him here rather the day-star than the sun, because he is speaking of his appearance in this life, whereas the full knowledge of him is deferred till his second coming. So the day-dawning is easily understood. And this is expected to rise not absolutely, but comparatively in respect of degrees of fuller manifestation, as he promises to those that continue in his word, and are his disciples indeed, that they shall know the truth, viz. more fully, John 8:31-32. And that passage, Hosea 6:3. 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning,' doth excellently serve to show us this truth. So there he hath respect to this further manifestation of Christ which they were afterwards to

have: but they are not then to give over the prophetic word; for, as was before noticed, the word until is not always exclusive of the following time, as Psalms 110:1. 2 Samuel 6:1-23.

Now, if the writings of the prophets be more sure than a voice from heaven, and Christians are commended for taking heed to the same; and when the day-star ariseth in the heart, it shows only the same thing more clearly. What place is there left for new revelations against or besides the scriptures?

Secondly, The Papists set the church upon the tribunal: but what that church is, they do not agree among themselves, whether it be the pope, or a council, or both together. However, they assert that there is in the church a visible and infallible judge of controversies in religion. This we deny, and far more that the pope, or a council approved by him, is such a judge. For,

1. The scripture makes no mention of any such judge, in any of the places where the officers of the church are reckoned up, as Romans 12:7-8. 1 Corinthians 12:28. Ephesians 4:11. nor any where else. and though negative theology, as they say, is not argumentative, yet that cannot have place here, unless we deny the perfection of the scripture, which we have proved already. a positive institution is requisite here.

2. Our faith must not lean upon the testimony or authority of man, 1 Corinthians 12:23. 'Be not the servants of men,' not bodily but spiritually; 2 Corinthians 1:24. 'Not that we have dominion over your faith;' where the apostle declines, in his own name, and in the name of his fellows, the being of such a judge. But our faith leans on the word of God, Ephesians 2:20. "And are built on the foundation of the prophets,' &c.;

3. The doctrine of the church should be examined by the scriptures, Acts 17:11. 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Now he whose sentence is to be examined by another, cannot be the supreme judge of controversies. See 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.'

4. Neither pope nor council, conjunctly nor severally, have such properties as are requisite to constitute a supreme judge in controversies of religion; they have no infallibility, or testimony thereof; yea, they have many ways deceived and been deceived. We may appeal from them, as being bound to the scriptures, as well as others. and the church, be what it will, must not be judge in its own cause.

5. Lastly, Here is a controversy in religion, Who is the supreme judge of controversy in religion ? Who must decide this, or be supreme judge here ? The church cannot, neither pope nor council so decide it in their own favour. That were absurd. Wherefore the Papists themselves are obliged to make another judge of this controversy; and if so, why not of all ?

Thirdly, The Socinians set up reason to be the supreme judge of controversies in religion, to whose determination we ought to stand, and therein to acquiesce. There is no doubt but we have much use for reason in matters of religion; as, (1.) To perceive and understand the things revealed in the scripture, Matthew 13:51. (2.) To collate them one with another, Acts 17:11. (3.) To explain the same, Nehemiah 8:8. (4.) To argue from the scriptures, Matthew 21:1-46. (5.) TO vindicate the

truths from objections, Romans 9:19-20. That it is not the judge nor the rule, that is, that reason ought not to be admitted of itself, and according to its principles, to determine controversies of religion, is what we assert. To illustrate this by an example, the scripture says, These three are one; we say we plainly perceive the scripture says so; and therefore, though our reason cannot comprehend, we will believe it, because it is plain the scripture says so. They say, they cannot believe that there are three persons in the Godhead, and not three gods, because reason is against it; and therefore finding the thing unagreeable to reason, though it were in ever so plain words found in the scripture, they will not believe (as they pretend) it means as the words sound, but will fasten another meaning on the words though never so far fetched. And that it may not be thought that this is the same way that the orthodox go too, in explaining scriptures that are understood figuratively, I shall give an example of that too. The scripture says, Christ is a vine, a door, the bread Is his body, &c. We know indeed that this is contrary to reason if expounded literally: but that is not the prime reason why we reject the literal meaning, and on which we build our faith as to the true meaning, as the case is with the Socinians, but because it agrees not with other scriptures to understand it so; which testify that Christ is God and man. Now, that reason is not the supreme judge of controversies in religion, is proved by the following arguments.

1. Reason in an unregenerate man is blind in the matters of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' Ephesians 4:17-28. Ephesians 5:8. Except. This only respects reason not illustrated by divine revelation. Ans. By that illustration of reason by divine revelation, they understand either subjective or objective illustration. If they understand it of subjective illustration, they quit that article of their religion, wherein they believe that the mind of man is capable of itself, without the illumination of the Spirit, to attain sufficient knowledge of the mind of God revealed in the scripture. If of objective illustration, by the mere revelation of these truths, then it is false that they assert: For the apostle opposes here the natural man to the spiritual man; and therefore by the natural man is understood every unregenerate man, even that has these truths revealed to him; for, says the apostle, they are foolishness unto him.' Now, how can he judge them foolishness if they be not revealed ?

2. Reason is not infallible, and therefore cannot be admitted judge in matters concerning our souls. Reason may be deceived. Romans 3:4. and is not this to shake the foundations of religion, and to pave a way to scepticism and atheism? Except. That is not to be feared where sound reason is admitted judge. But why talk they of sound reason ? The adversaries themselves will yield, that reason is unsound in the most part of men. We say, that it is not fully sound in the world; for even the best know but in part; darkness remains in some measure on the minds of all men.

3. Reason must be subject to the scripture, and submit itself to be judged by God speaking there, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. 'The weapons of our warfare are--mighty--to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations,--and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Matters of faith are above the sphere of reason; and therefore as sense is not admitted judge in those things that are above it, so neither reason in those, things that are above it, 1 Timothy 3:16.

4. If reason were the supreme judge of controversies, then our faith should be built on ourselves, and the great reason why we believe any principle of religion would be, because it appears so and

so to us; which is most absurd. The scripture teaches otherwise, 1 Thessalonians 2:13. 'Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God.' Most plainly does our Lord teach this, John 5:34, 'I receive not testimony from men;' John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.'

Fourthly, The orthodox assert the supreme judge of controversies in religion to be the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures. This is proved by the following arguments.

1. In the Old and New Testaments, the Lord still sends us to this judge. So that we may neither turn to the right hand nor left from what he there speaks, Deuteronomy 5:32. and Deuteronomy 17:11. ' According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee;' Isaiah 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony,' &c.; Luke 16:29. 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;' John 5:39. "Search the scriptures.' Some hereto refer that passage, Matthew 19:28. 'Verily I say onto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' In this sense it must be meant of the doctrine they taught as dictated to them by the Holy Ghost.

2. It was the practice of Christ and his apostles to appeal to the Spirit speaking in the scriptures, Matthew 4:1-25. where Christ still answers Satan with that, 'It is written,' And so while discoursing with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Matthew 22:31-32. So also in John 5:1-47. and John 10:1-42. and Luke 24:44. And so did others, Acts 17:11; Acts 26:22-23. 2 Peter 1:19. Acts 15:15-16. A careful examination of which passages I recommend to you for your establishment in the truth.

3. To the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, and to him only, agree those things that are requisite to constitute one supreme Judge. (1.) We may certainly know that the sentence which he pronounces is true, for he is infallible being God. (2.) We cannot appeal from him, for he is one above whom there is none. (3.) He is no respecter of persons, nor can be biassed in favour of one in preference to another.

Having discussed the doctrinal part of this subject, I shall now conclude with two or three inferences.

Inf. 1. People then should diligently read and study the holy scriptures, in order to their knowing what to believe and what to do. As the scripture is the only rule and test of faith and obedience, let us accomplish a diligent search into it, that we may understand all matters to be believed and practised in order to our salvation, and reject every dictate and every precept, come from what quarter it will, if it be not taught us in the sacred records. We are not to believe anything to be an article of faith, or a duty that we are to perform, unless it has the sanction of the Spirit of God in the written word, and be enjoined us by that infallible Judge. Let it then be our daily care and principal study to acquaint ourselves with the word of God, and draw from that infallible treasury all our knowledge as to faith and practice.

2. How dangerous must it be to maintain opinions and practices which are evinced to be contrary to the word of God? How hazardous must be the state of those who hold doctrines contrary to and eversive of the foundations of Christianity? Many such doctrines are taught and propagated in our day; such as the tenets of Socinians and Arians, who degrade the Son of God to the rank of a, mere creature, and deny his supreme Godhead and essential glory, and impugn his satisfaction; the Arminians, who overturn the doctrine of original sin, assert free will, and stickle for the

resistibility of grace, and other things eversive of the doctrine of the Bible; and others who set up creeds, confessions, and covenants of human manufacture, in the place of the infallible oracles of truth.

3. How worthy of reproof are they who make no conscience of reading the scriptures They seldom look into them, or at most only on a sabbath-day, without giving attention to what they read; and so are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion.

4. Religion, if it be of the right sort, will be practical religion. A blind obedience, or ignorant obedience, to some of the duties of religion is no better than bodily exercise, which profiteth little. All right obedience flows from a principle of faith in the heart. True faith will always be productive of, and accompanied with good works. and it is in vain for men to say they have religion; unless they abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory Of God. Let us then show our faith by our works, in having a respect unto all the commands of God, and doing whatsoever he has enjoined us in his word.

S. The Scriptures the Book of the Lord

THE SCRIPTURES THE BOOK OF THE LORD, AND THE DILIGENT STUDY AND SEARCH THEREOF RECOMMENDED AND URGED.

Isaiah 34:16.--Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read : no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

Having considered the divine authority of the holy scriptures, and their scope, I come now to recommend unto you the diligent study and search of these sacred oracles, from the text now read. In the former part of this chapter, there are most terrible threatenings denounced against the enemies of God and his church, which receive not their full accomplishment till the last day, as appears from ver. 4, 10. In the text there is the confirmation of the whole. And therein we have, 1. An intimation that all shall be accomplished according to the word. Wherein two things are to be observed.

(1.) The study of the word required. Where we may notice, (1.) The hononrable epithet given to it, The book of the Lord. Thus the holy scripture is called, as being of divine original and authority, God himself being the author of it. It is true, that in Isaiah's days, even the canon of the Old Testament was not completed, some of the historical books, and of the prophetical too, not being then written. But the body of the doctrine of the word was comprised in the law, or five books of Moses; and what was afterwards written, was but a building on that foundation, by enlargement, explication, and application; And this prophecy looking as far as the end of the world, the Spirit of God might here have an eye to the complete canon of the Old and New Testament. [2.] The study of it recommended, Seek: out of it. The word signifies to inquire, search, seek out; and imports diligence and earnestness in consulting a thing to learn from it. And so it is emphatically pointed, to denote a vehemency and intenseness of spirit in the study. It does in a great measure answer that word, Acts 17:11 --Searched the scriptures. We are not only to seek from it, but out of it, or, as the Hebrew signifies, from in it, or, as in the Greek, to it, and seek from it. [3.] The way to study, read it. Do not satisfy yourselves to hear if, but read it with your own eyes. For the eye makes ordinarily deeper impression than the ear.

(2.) The accomplishment in the most minute circumstance. [1.] Whereas the Lord had named a great many horrible creatures that should possess the dwellings of his enemies, none of then shall fail, they shall all be there.[2.] Whereas he had said they should have their mates, that so their binds might be continued there, none of them shall want their mate for that purpose.

2. The confirmation or reason of this accomplishment according to the word. and it hath two parts, namely, that he has spoken the one, and will effectuate the other.

(1.) Himself has spoken the word: My mouth it hath, commanded. His truth is engaged for its accomplishment. He has commanded, not these creatures, but the word or book, as Psalms 105:8.--The word he commanded: and God is said to command his word, for that he gives it as a lawgiver, of supreme authority. And so this answers to the first part of the intimation.

(2.) He will effectuate the thing in accomplishment of the word: His spirit will gather these creatures. So his power is engaged to make it forthcoming. There seems to be here a remarkable change of the persons. But I am mistaken if the mouth of the Lord be not one of the names of Christ in the scripture: Thus, Isaiah 62:2. 'Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.' Jeremiah 23:16. " They speak--not out of the mouth of the Lord.' Compare John 1:18. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Hebrews 1:1-2. 'God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.' And so the words run very plainly and exactly according to the original, For my mouth he hath commanded, and his Spirit it hath gathered them.

Two doctrines naturally arise from the words, viz.

Doct. I. 'The holy scripture is the book of the Lord.'

Doct. II. " The scripture is a book to be read, carefully, and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into.' As it is the last of these doctrines I mainly intend to discourse upon, I shall be very brief in the illustration of the first: and though some things to be spoken upon it interfere with what has been already delivered, I hope it will tend to your establishment in the truth, and the more endear the holy scripture to you.

Doct. I. 'The holy scripture is the book of the Lord.'

All I intend upon this head is to show, I. In what respects the holy scripture is the book of the Lord.

II.That it is so.

III. Make a short improvement.

I. My first province is to show in what respects the holy scripture is the book of the Lord.

1. The Lord is the subject-matter of that book, as the book of the wars of the Lord. It is the commendation of a book, that it treats of a noble subject; and this book treats of God, the great scope of it being to show what God is, and what his will is. Hence we are commanded to 'hold fast the form of sound words,' 2 Timothy 1:13. If we would know God, and our duty to him, we must turn to this book and learn it.

2. The Lord is the author of it, 2 Timothy 3:16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' And who was fit to make a book on that noble subject but himself? John 1:18. forecited. It is the product of his own unerring Spirit, and so his own book in a most proper sense. It is for this reason that it is called 'the book of the Lord.' It is true, several hands were employed in the writing of it; but yet all and every part of it was from the Lord.

(1.) The motion to write was from the Lord, by a particular impulse on the spirits of the holy penmen, which influenced them to the work, and carried them on it, 2 Peter 1:21. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Sometimes they had particular express calls, but they had always this motion powerfully determining and inclining them to the work.

(2.) The matter of their writing was from him. He laid it to their hands, 2 Timothy 3:16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' Some things were matters of pure revelation, that could not be

known otherwise; such as things past, whereof there was no manner of record, things to come, things without the reach of men's knowledge, as the thoughts of others. These things they had by immediate suggestion. Some things they might have by other records, their own judgment, or memory. In these the Spirit of the Lord infallibly guided them what to chose and refuse, strengthened their judgment and memories, so that they could not mistake, John 16:13. 'The Spirit of truth--will guide you into all truth.

(3) The very words they wrote were from him. Since the apostles spoke the very words of the Holy Ghost, much more did they write them, 1 Corinthians 2:13. And therefore God is said to speak by and in the holy penmen, 2 Samuel 23:2.Luke 1:70. Acts 1:16. He did not give them the matter to put in their own words, but put the words in their hearts too, but in a manner suited to their native style. And truly it is hard to conceive how the inspiration of the holy scriptures could reach the end without it, seeing so much depends on the suitable expressing of matter.

II. I proceed to show, that the holy scripture is the book of the Lord. This is evident from many things, of which I shall only observe a few.

1. This book discovers what no mortal could ever have done, and nowise could be had but by divine revelation, as the history of the creation, what was done before man was on the earth, the sublime mysteries of the Trinity of the incarnation of the Son of God, and the eternal counsels of God concerning man's salvation.

2. The perfect holiness of the doctrine. It commands all holiness, forbids all impurity in heart and life, under the pain of damnation: which shows it could neither be the work of men, being so far above their reach, and cross to their corrupt nature; nor of evil angels, being so opposite to Satan's kingdom; nor of good ones, who could never have put a cheat on the world, making their own words pass for God's.

3. The efficacy of the doctrine in its searching and convincing the conscience, Hebrews 4:12.; converting souls from their most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the world for such a change, Psalms 19:7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, Psalms 19:8. This is not from any virtue in the letters or syllables, but from the Spirit, whose instrument it is.

4. The miracles wherewith it has been confirmed. These were wrought to confirm the doctrine, Matthew 9:6. These are God's seal, which he will never put to a lie.

5. Lastly, There is an inward sensation of this in the spirits of those that have their senses exercised. For it is not to be doubted, but as the works of God bear the marks of a divine hand, so his word also does. And while there are such manifest differences betwixt one voice and another of men, how can it be thought, but the voice of God has a peculiar signature on it? If that be not discerned by others, it is by his own people that know his voice.

I shall now make a short improvement of this point.

Use 1. For information. It informs us, that,

1. The scripture is the best of books. They who heard Christ, said, 'Never man spake like this man:' and they that see the true glory of the scriptures must own, never did any write like these writings. There we have the true picture of the great Author, in spotless holiness; there the

revelation of his mind with respect to our salvation. Whatever other books there be in the world relating to our salvation; they are but dim tapers lighted at this burning lamp.

2. They are enemies to God that are enemies to the scriptures, whether in their principles, as Papists and others, or in their practices. For if men loved God, they would love his word, Psalms 119:97. And men, by their relish of the word, may know what case their souls are in. For according as they relish the scriptures, so is it with their souls. If they have lost the gust of them, it is evident that either they have no grace, or that it is not in exercise.

3. Woe to those whom the Bible condemns; and these are all wicked men and hypocrites, whatever their stations or professions be. But happy they whom it approves and justifies; and these are all the sincere seekers of God. Seek to be of the number of the latter, and then none of the woes denounced in God's word shall fall upon you.

USE II. Of exhortation.

1. Let us highly prize this book for the sake of the author. The Ephesians thought that they had good ground to be zealous for the image of Diana, because they fancied it fell down from Jupiter, Acts 19:35. Your Bible is a book really come from God; let us be ashamed we do not prize it more, by using it diligently to the ends for which if was given the church.

2. Let us believe it in all the parts thereof; the commands, that we may study to conform ourselves to them; the promises, that we may thereby be encouraged to a holy life; and the threatenings, that we may thereby be deterred from sin. Alas ! though we own it to be the word of God, that we are no more moved with it than if it were the word of man, and such a man as we give little credit to. For compare the lives of the most part with it they say, it is but idle tales.

3. Let us submit our souls to it, as the oracles of the living God. He is the great Lawgiver, and in that book he speaks: let us own his authority in his word, and submit to it as the rule of our faith and life, without disputing or opposing.

4. Lastly, Let us study to be well acquainted with it, and make it our business to search the scriptures. This brings me to the main thing I intend.

DOCT. II. " The scripture is a book to be read, carefully and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into."

If ye ask, by whom this is to be done ? it is by all into whose hands, by the mercy of God, it comes. Some never had it, and so they will not be condemned for slighting it, Romans 2:12. Magistrates are called to look into it, and be much conversant in it, Joshua 1:8. 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein. Deuteronomy 17:18-19. 'And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them.' Ministers are in a special manner called to the study of it, 1 Timothy 4:13. 'Give attendance to reading. 2 Timothy 3:16-17.' All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' But not they only are so commanded, but all others within the church, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.'

Deuteronomy 6:6-7. " These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' In discoursing further from this point, I shall, I. Explain this seeking into the book of the Lord.

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

III. Make application.

I. I am to explain this seeking into the book of the Lord. And here I will show, 1. What is presupposed in this seeking.

2. What is the import of a studious inquiry into the scriptures.

First, I am to show what is presupposed in this seeking into the book of the Lord. It presupposes,

1. That man has lost his way, and needs direction to find it, Psalms 119:176. 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant.' Miserable man is bemisted in a vain world, which is a dark place, and has as much need of the scriptures to direct him, as one has of a light in darkness, 2 Peter 1:19. What a miserable case is that part of the world in that want the Bible ? They are vain in their imaginations, and grope in the dark, but cannot find the way of salvation. In no better case are those to whom it has not come in power.

2. That man is in hazard of being led farther and farther wrong. This made the spouse say, 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions ? There is a subtle devil, a wicked world, corrupt lusts within one's own breast, to lead him out of the right way, that we had need to give over, and take this guide. There are many false lights in the world, which, if followed, will lead the traveller into a mire, and leave him there.

3. That men are slow of heart to understand the mind of God in His word. It win cost searching diligently ere we can take it up, John 5:39. Our eyes are dim to the things of God, our apprehensions dull, and our judgment is weak. And therefore, because the iron is blunt, we must put too the more strength. We lost the sharpness of our sight in spiritual things in Adam; and our corrupt wills and carnal affections, that savour not the things of God, do more blind our judgments: and therefore it is a labour to us to find out what is necessary for our salvation.

4. That the book of the Lord has its difficulties which are not to be easily solved. Therefore the Psalmist prays, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law,' Psalms 119:18. Philip asked the eunuch,' Understandest thou what thou readest ? And he said, how can I, except some man should guide me ? ' There are depths there wherein an elephant may swim, and will exercise the largest capacities, with all the advantages they may be possessed of. God in his holy providence has so ordered it, to stain the pride of all glory; to make his word the liker himself, whom none can search out to perfection, and to sharpen the diligence of his people in their inquiries into it.

5. That we need highly to understand it, otherwise we would not be bidden search into it. 'Of the times and seasons (says the apostle), ye have no need that I write unto you;' and therefore he wrote not of them. There is a treasure in this field; we are called to dig for it; for tho' it be hid, yet

we must have it, or we will pine away in our spiritual poverty.

6. Lastly, That we may gain from it by diligent inquiry. The holy humble heart will not be always sent empty away from these wells of salvation, when it plies itself to draw. There are shallow places in these waters of the sanctuary, where lambs may wade.

SECONDLY, I proceed to show what is the import of a studious inquiry into the scriptures. This holds out the matter and manner of the duty.

First, As for the matter of the duty; it lies in three things.

1. We should be capable to read the scriptures distinctly. Alas ! How shall they study the book of God that cannot so much as read it? Isaiah 29:12. It is sad to think that there are among Christians who call God their Father, and cannot read his testament; who say they would be at heaven, and yet cannot consult the directions for the way. And if their parents have neglected to teach them, they have not the grace to make up that by their own industry. Their case is little better that cannot read it distinctly; for without that there can be little benefit got by it. Nehemiah 8:8.

2. We should acquaint ourselves with the letter of the scriptures, the histories, prophecies, precepts, &c. This Timothy is commended for, 'that from a child he had known the holy scriptures,' 2 Timothy 3:15. That is the sacred field where the treasure lies; the blessed body, where the soul of the scripture lodgeth; the words wherein the mind of God towards sinners is held forth, Matthew 13:52.

3. We ought to labour to understand the mind of God in them, and that savingly and spiritually. Wisdom lies in the book of the Lord; and see what course we should take to get at it, Proverbs 2:4-5. 'If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God.' To read the scriptures just for reading's sake, without labouring to understand what ye read, is very unprofitable work. Nay we should search narrowly till we find the sense and meaning of what we read, as one that digs deep, breaks the clods of earth, till he finds the golden ore.

Secondly, As to the manner of the duty; it imports,

1. A high esteem of the treasure to be found in the book of the Lord, Matthew 13:44. People will not be at the pains to seek into what they do not value. If men did not prize gold, they would not rip up the bowels of the earth for it. It is the undervaluing of the scriptures that makes people so little to study and seek into them.

2. A design of spiritual profit by the scripture. No wise man will be at pains but to gain thereby. And he that would aright study the holy scriptures, must design his soul's advantage thereby. We should come to the reading of the book of the Lord, as to a soul-feast, Psalms 119:131; its to the gathering of spoil after battle, Psalms 119:162. Some read the scriptures to furnish their heads with notions of the things of religion, and their tongues with talk about them; but read ye for holiness to your hearts, and to rule your walk thereby. Some read them to support their errors, and some for matter of jest and drollery; which are horrible work. But 'search ye the scriptures: for in them ye will find eternal life; and they are they that testify of Christ,' John 5:39.

3. A serious application of the heart to the work; for it will not be a by-hand work, Psalms 1:2. In the scriptures God speaks to us, as in prayer we speak to God; and when God speaks, we should listen attentively. The angels pry into scripture-mysteries, 1 Peter 1:12. So should we into the scriptures, James 1:25.

4. Painfulness in the study. Silver and gold are not to be gathered up by every lazy passenger from the surface of the earth, as stones are, but must with labour be digged out of the bowels of it, Proverbs 2:4. forecited. This is the gate of heaven; and there must be striving to get in at it. It is not easy to overcome a dark, carnal, hard heart, which unfits us for the study of the scriptures. And indeed many get but little advantage by their reading it; for dig they cannot, and beg they will not; and therefore they go empty from these wells of salvation.

5. Diligence and constancy, 1 Peter 1:10. It is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich in all cases, while drousiness cloaths a man with rags. See the duty of a Christian with respect to the word, Psalms 1:2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' He suffers not his Bible to gather dust.

Lastly, A thorough search. We should go through every leaf of the book of the Lord, and endeavour to acquire the knowledge of the whole scriptures. For 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,'2 Timothy 3:16. Some never read all the Bible in their days, but pick out portions here and there only. Searchers do not so, but look into every corner, And we should labour to know more and more of what we have some insight into: for this Bible says one, contains a puncheon that hitherto has not been pierced.

II. The next general head is, to give the reasons of the point, that the book of the Lord should be read, carefully and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into.

1. Because the way of salvation is to be found only therein, John 5:39. forecited. This is the star risen in a dark world, to guide us where Christ is. All the researches of the wise men of the world, all the inventions of men, can never guide us to Immanuel's land, John 1:18. 'No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Here, and here only, the counsels of God touching man's salvation are discovered. And so, as salvation is the most necessary thing, the study of the scriptures is the most necessary exercise. To slight it, is to judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life.

2. It is the only rule of our faith and lives, 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,' Ephesians 2:20. 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' Revelation 22:18-19. 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' The Bible is the pattern shown on the mount, to which our faith and lives must be conformed, if we would please God. The Lord says to us, as Deuteronomy 28:14. 'Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left.' None can walk regularly unless they observe the rule; but how can one

observe it unless he know it ? Matthew 22:29. God has given each of us our post in the world: the Bible is the book of our instructions; and shall we not study it:! The lawyer studies his law-books, the physician his medical books; and shall not a Christian study the book of the Lord ?

3. The Lord himself dictated it, and gave it us for that very end, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. forecited, Romans 5:4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' And has the Spirit of the Lord written it, and will not we read it? Has he given it us to be studied by us, and will we slight it ? This must be horrid contempt of God, and ingratitude to him with a witness. Whose image and superscription is this on the scriptures:! Is it not the Lord's ? Then take it up and read.

4. We must be judged by the scriptures at the great day, John 12:48. That is one of the books opened, Revelation 20:12. This is the book of the Lord's laws and ordinances, by which he will proceed in absolving or condemning us. I own God will go another way to work with those who never had the Bible, Romans 2:12. But know thou, that seeing it is in the country where thou livest, though thou never readest a letter of it, thou must be judged by it. Is there not good reason then for reading the scriptures:!

III. I proceed now to the practical improvement of this important subject.

USE I. Of information. It lets us see, 1. The necessity and advantage of translations of the scriptures into the vulgar languages, as I have formerly shown.

2. The people not only may without any licence from the church guides, but must read the scriptures, for God has commanded it. The Papists here take away the key of knowledge; for their kingdom riseth and standeth by darkness, and ignorance of the scriptures.

3. The scriptures, whatever difficulties be in them, yet are so plain in things necessary to salvation, that even the unlearned may reap advantage by reading them.

USE II.Of exhortation. I exhort one and all of you to the study of the holy scriptures, to seek out of the book of the Lord, and read. I will lay this before you in several branches, before I come to the motives.

1. Let such as cannot read, learn to read. Ye that have children, as ye tender their immortal souls, teach them to read the Bible. Remember therefore the vows taken upon you at their baptism, and the duty laid upon you by the Lord himself, Ephesians 6:4. 'Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' 2 Timothy 3:15. Timothy from a child knew the holy scriptures. Ye who got no learning when ye were young, labour to get it now. Alas! some parents, or others that have had some when young with them, have been cruel to their souls, as the ostrich to her young. They have learned them to work, but have been at no pains to teach them to read; so have sent them out into the world a prey to the devourer's teeth, without the ordinary means of the knowledge of God. Thus they are destroyed with gross ignorance. But will ye pity your own souls, though others did not that brought you up? And do not enter yourselves heirs to their sin, by being as negligent of yourselves as they were. Though perhaps they left you nothing to live upon, yet for a livelihood ye have done something for your bodies. And will you do nothing for your souls ? Think not it will excuse thee at the hand of God, that thou art a servant; for thy soul is in as great danger as thy master's, and ignorance of religion will destroy it, Isaiah 27:11. There are few but know how to improve the scarcity of servants to the raising of the fee; but will you improve it by

getting it in your condition to learn to read, and seek out such families where you may have that advantage, for some such there are, like Abraham's, Genesis 18:10. Nay rather than not do it, give over service for a time, and learn. Neither will it excuse you that now you have a family; for you have an immortal soul still, which gross ignorance of the mind of God in the scriptures will ruin eternally, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. And the more need you have to read the scriptures, that you have a family, that you may know the Lord's mind yourself, and teach it your family. Such an excuse will no more screen you from everlasting destruction, than covering yourself with leaves will save you from the flames of a devouring fire. Say not you are too old now to learn. It is never out of time to learn to do well for your eternal salvation. If your eyes can serve you to learn, you ought to do it, whatever your age be. But if your sight be so far gone, that you cannot though you were ever so willing; then tremble at the thoughts of the awful judgment of God, that has taken away sight from you, that when you had it would not use it for his glory, and the good of your own soul; and humble thyself, and apply to the blood of Christ, for this thy neglect, lest it prove ruining to thee for ever. And cause others read to you, and beg the teaching of the Spirit, if so be such an old careless slighter of salvation may find mercy.

2. Let such as can read procure Bibles. I dare say one that has a love to the Bible (and that all who love the Lord have) will make many shifts ere they want one. But they must be lawful shifts: for stealing of Bibles, or keeping them up from the owners, is like a thief stealing a rope to hang himself in. But spare it off your bellies or your backs, and procure one rather than want.

3. Let such as have Bibles read them frequently, and acquaint themselves with the book of the Lord. Read them in your families morning and evening; and read them in secret by yourselves; it should be a piece of your duties in secret. Make the Bible your companion abroad and at home, in the house and in the field. It is lamentable to think how unacquainted with the Bible many are, and how little heart they have to it. Ballads and song-books get the place of the Bible with many; and many have no use for it but once in the week, on the sabbath-day, as if it were more for a show with them than the necessity of their souls.

4.Lastly, Not only read it, but search into it, and study it, to know the mind of God therein, and that ye may do it. Be not superficial in your reading of the scriptures, but do it with application, painfulness, and diligence; using all means to read it with understanding; breaking through the surface that ye may come at the hid treasure therein. Reading as well as praying by rote is to little purpose: for a parcel of bare words will neither please God, nor edify your own souls.

I shall now give some motives to enforce this important duty of reading the scriptures.

Mot. 1 God requires it of us, he commands us to do it, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures The Jews had once the scriptures committed to them; but did God design they should only have them in the temple? nay, in their houses also: Only laid up in the ark ? nay, he designed another chest for them, even their hearts, Deuteronomy 6:6-7. formerly cited. Let the authority of God sway you, then, and as you have any regard to it, study the scriptures.

Mot. 2. Nay, the very being of the Bible among us is enough to move us to study it, seeing it is that by which we must stand or fall for ever. The proclaiming of the law publicly is sufficient to oblige the subjects; and they cannot plead ignorance, though they get not every one a copy of it. Ignonrntia juris excusat neminem ; for every one ought to know the rule of his duty, and sinners

will be condemned by it, if they conform not to it, whether they knew it or not, John 3:19.

Mot. 3. It is an exercise very pleasing to God, so that it be done in a right manner, namely, in faith. For thereby God speaks to us, and we hear and receive his words at his mouth; and obedient ears are his delight.

1. The Spirit of God commends it. It was the commendation of the Bereans, Acts 17:11. of Apollos, Acts 18:24. of Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:15. And why does the Spirit of God commend others for this, but to recommend the scriptures to us ?

2. There is a particular blessing annexed to this exercise, Revelation 1:3. 'Blessed is he that readeth.' And the children of God in all ages have sucked the sap of it, while they have had sweet fellowship with God in his word, and the influences of the Spirit, to the quickening, enlightening, fructifying and comforting their souls.

Mot. 4. consider what a great privilege it is, that we have the scriptures to read and study, at this day. If Christ had not died for our salvation, the world had never been blessed with this glorious light, but had been in darkness here, as a pledge of eternal darkness. Let us compare our case with that of others, and see our privilege.

1. Look back to the case of the church in its first age before the flood, or the time of Moses, while they had not the written word. The will of God was revealed to some of them by visions, voices, dreams, &c.; but we may say, as 2 Peter 1:19. 'We have a more sure word of prophecy.' But that was not the lot of all, but of a few among them; the rest behoved to learn by tradition. Now every one has alike access to the word of divine revelation.

2. Look to the case of the church under the Old Testament. In David's time there was little more than the five books of Moses written; yet how does that holy soul swell in commendation of his little Bible, when little more than the ground-work of this glorious structure was laid! Psalms 119:1-176. Take that church at her best in this respect, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed, they saw not the light of the New. Now the whole canon of the scripture is in our hands, this glorious image of God has got the finishing stroke; no more is to be added thereto for ever. The New Testament casts a light upon the types, shadows, and dark prophecies of the Old; And shall we not be sensible of our mercy ?

3. But look abroad into the Pagan world at this day, in comparison of which all that know any part of the scriptures are but few, and the Bible is not heard of among them. That precious treasure is not opened to them to this day, and they can know no more of God but what they can learn from the dark glimmerings of nature's light. O may we not in some sort say, as Psalms 147:19, Psalms 147:20. 'He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.'

4. Look back but a few years hence, when no Bibles were but such as were manuscript, namely, before the art of printing was found out, which was but a little before the reformation from Popery. How rare behoved they then to be ! and how dear, ye may easily perceive. But now how common and easy are they to be had ?

5. Look to the case of those that lived, or yet live, under Popish tyranny, where it is a crime to have or to read the Bible without a special licence. What a struggle had our reformers in this church, ere

they could get allowance by the laws of the land to read the Bible in English ? And how is the Bible kept out of the people's hands to this day in Popish countries ? Whereas now ye are pressed to read and study it, a New Testament was very precious in those days of Popish persecution, when one gave a cart-load of hay for a leaf of the Bible. But, alas ! as one says of the French Protestants, When they burned us for reading the scriptures, we burned in zeal to be reading them; now with our liberty is bred also negligence and disesteem of God's word.

6. Lastly, Consider the many helps there are to understand the scriptures beyond what were formerly. Many have run to and fro, and knowledge that way has been increased, both by preaching and writing. And that useful exercise of lecturing, which our church has commanded to be of a large portion of scripture, is no small help. What will we be able to answer to the Lord, if this great privilege be slighted ?

Mot. 5. Consider it has been the way of the people of God, to be much addicted to and conversant in the scripture. So true is it that wisdom is justified of her children. O take heed ye go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and ye will not find them in the way of slighting, but prizing the word of God. Consider,

1. Ye shall find the saints highly prizing the word, Psalms 19:1-14. & Psalms 119:1-176. what large commendations of the word are there ! How sweet was it to Jeremiah ! Jeremiah 15:16. ' Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' Peter, who heard the voice on the mount, yet prefers the scriptures to voices from heaven, 2 Peter 1:19. Paul speaks highly of it, 2 Timothy 3:16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' The martyrs highly prized it, and ventured their lives for it. One cast away at sea, and swimming for his life on a mast, having five pounds, which was all his stock, in the one hand, and a Bible in the other, and being obliged to let go one of them, kept the Bible, and let the five pounds go.

2. Ye shall find them much addicted to the study of the word. It was David's companion and bosom oracle, Psalms 119:97. Daniel at Babylon searches the scriptures of the prophets, Daniel 9:2. So did the noble Bereans, Apollos, and Timothy.

3. Yea, the Spirit of God makes it the character of a godly man, Psalms 1:2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' O how rational is that! The man that is born of God has a natural desire after the word, as the child after the mother's breast, 1 Peter 2:2. The new nature tends to communion with God; it is by the word the soul has communion with him, for thereby God speaks to us. And therefore it is a sad sign; that there are few true Christians, while there are so few that diligently ply the word.

Mot. 6. Consider the excellency of the scriptures. There is a transcendent glory in them, which whoso discerns cannot miss to hug and embrace them. To commend the Bible to you, I shall say these eight things of it.

1. It is the best of books. They may know much, ye think, that have many good books; but have ye the Bible, and ye have the best book in the world. It is the book of the Lord, dictated by unerring infinite wisdom. There is no dress here with the gold, no chaff with the corn. Every word of God is pure. There is nothing for our salvation to be had in other books, but what is learned from this. They are but the rivulets that run from this fountain, and all shine with light borrowed from thence.

And it has a blessing annexed to it, a glory and majesty in it, an efficacy with it, that no other book has the like. Therefore Luther professed he would burn his books he had writ, rather than they should divert people from reading the scriptures.

2. It is the greatest and most excellent of the works of God to be seen in the world, Psalms 138:2. If the world beautified with sun, moon, and stars, be as a precious ring, the Bible is the diamond in the ring. The sparkling stars, and that glorious globe of light the sun, yet leave but a dark world, where there is no Bible. Were it put to the choice of the saints, either to put the sun out of the firmament, or the Bible out of the world, they would choose the former, but never the latter; for that they cannot want till they go there where they shall read all in the face of Jesus. For that must needs be most excellent that has most of God in it.

3. It is the oracles of God, Romans 3:2. This was the chief of the Jewish privileges, without which their temple, altar, &c. would have been but dumb signs. The Pagan world did highly reverence and prize the devil's oracles: but we have God's oracles, while we have the scriptures that manifest to us the secrets of heaven, and if we discern aright who speaks in them, we must say, The voice of God, and not of man. Here is what you may consult safely in all your doubts and darknesses; here is what will lead you into all truth.

4. It is the laws of heaven, Psalms 19:7. The Lord and King of heaven is our great Lawgiver, and the laws are written in this book. It concerns us to study it. Hence we must prove our title to heaven, the blessed inheritance, or we will never obtain it. From thence the sentence of our justification must be drawn, else we are still in a state of wrath. Here is the rule we must follow, that we may please God here; and from this book shall the sentence of our absolution or condemnation be drawn at the great day.

5. It is Christ's testament and latter-will, 1 Corinthians 11:25. Our Lord has died, and he has left us this Bible as his testament; and that makes his children have such an affection to it. Herein he has left them his legacy, not only moveables, but the eternal inheritance; and his last will is now confirmed, that shall stand for ever without alteration. So all the believer's hopes are in this Bible, and this is the security he has for all the privileges he can lay claim to. This is his charter for heaven, the disposition by which he lays claim to the kingdom. and therefore, if ye have any interest in the testament, ye must needs not be slighters of it.

6. It is the sceptre of his kingdom, Psalms 110:2. and it is a sceptre of righteousness. It is by this word he rules his church, and guides all his children in their way to the land that is far off. Wherever he hath a kingdom, he wields it; and the nations subjecting themselves to him, receive it. And where he rules one's heart, it has place there too, Colossians 3:18. It is a golden sceptre of peace, stretched forth to rebels to win them by offering them peace; to fainting believers, to give them peace. And whosoever will not subject themselves to it, shall be broken with his rod of iron.

7. It is the channel of influences, by which the communications of grace are made, and the waters of the sanctuary flow into the soul, Isaiah 49:1-26. ult. The apostle appeals for this to the experience of the Galatians, Galatians 3:2. 'Received ye the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith ? Is the elect soul regenerated? the word is the incorruptible seed, whereof the new creature is formed, 1 Peter 1:23. Is faith begotten in the heart ? it is by the word, Romans 10:17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Is the new creature to be nourished,

strengthened, quickened, actuated, &c.? Christ is the fountain, faith the mouth of the soul, the word the pipes of conveyance, whereat faith must suck, as the child at the nipples.

8.Lastly, It is the price of blood even the blood of Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:25. Had not the personal Word become flesh, and therein died to purchase redemption for us, we had never seen this written word among us. For it is the book of the covenant which is founded on the blood of the Mediator. It is the grant and conveyance of the right to the favour of God, and all saving benefits to believers; for which there could have been no place had not Christ died. And they that slight it, will be found to tread under foot the blood of the covenant.

Mot. 7 Consider the usefulness of the word. If we consider the author, we may be sure of the usefulness of the work. The apostle tells us; that it alone is sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. There is no case a soul can be in, but it is suitable to their case, that desire to make use of it. To commend it to you from its usefulness, I will lay these eight things.

1. It is a treasure to the poor, and such are we all by nature, Revelation 3:17. 2 Corinthians 4:7. Therefore the Lord bids us search the scriptures, in allusion to those that search in mines for silver and gold. If the poor soul search here, receiving the word by faith, he is made up. He shall find there the discharge of his debt, a new right and title to the mortgaged inheritance. This word of the Lord is a treasure,

(1.) For worth. People make not treasures of any but valuable things. There is nothing in the scriptures but what is highly valuable. There are the eternal counsels of God touching our salvation; life and immortality brought to light; there are the purest percepts, the most awful threatenings, and the most precious promises, 2 Peter 1:4, &c.;

(2.) For variety. In the scriptures shines the manifold wisdom of God. They that nauseate this book of the Lord, because they find not new things in it after some time perusing it, discover their senses not to be exercised to discern. For should we come to it ever so often, bringing fresh affections with us, we would find fresh entertainment there; as is evident by the glorious refreshment sometimes found in a word, that has been often gone over before without any thing remarkable. And truly the saints shall never exhaust it while here; but as new discoveries are made in it in several ages, so it will be to the end.

(3.) For abundance. There is in it not only for the present, but for the time to come, Isaiah 42:23. There is abundance of light, instruction, comfort, &c. and what is needful for the saints travelling heavenward, Psalms 119:182. And indeed it is the spoil to be gathered by us. Our Lord having fought the battle against death and devils, here the spoil lies to be gathered by us that remained at home when the fight was.

(4.) Lastly, For closeness. This word contains the wisdom of God in a mystery. It is a hid book to most of the world, and indeed a sealed book to those that remain in their natural blindness. Nor can we get into the treasure without the illumination of the same Spirit which dictated it, 1 Corinthians 2:10. There is a path here which the vulture’s eye hath not seen, which the carnal eye cannot take up, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Therefore have we need to seek diligently, and pray, as Psalms 119:18. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law."

2. It is life to the dead: "The words that I speak unto you (says Christ), they are spirit, and they are life,' John 6:63. We are naturally dead in sins; but the word is the means of spiritual life. It is the ordinary means of conversion, Psalms 19:7. " The law of the Lord--converteth the soul;' and of regeneration, 1 Peter 1:23. 'Being born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God.' By it the soul is persuaded into the covenant, and brought to embrace Jesus Christ. For thereby the Spirit is communicated to the elect of God. Thus it is of use to bring sinners home to God, from under the power of darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son.

3. It is light to the blind, Psalms 19:8. 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' It is a convincing light, to discover one's state to him, and so to rouse up the soul from its natural security. It pierces the heart as an arrow, and makes the careless sinner stand and consider his way: for it freely tells every one his faults, James 1:25. And while the child of God travels through a dark world, it serves to light him the way, 2 Peter 1:19. 'a light shining in a dark place ; and lets him see how to set down every step. Hence David says, ' Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,' Psalms 119:105.

4. It is awakening to those that are asleep, Song of Solomon 7:9. It is the voice of God which is full of majesty, to awaken the sleepy Christian to the exercise of grace. For as it is the means of begetting grace in the heart, so it is also the means of actuating and quickening thereof, Psalms 119:90. 'Thy word hath quickened me.' Here the Christian may hear the alarm sound to rise up and be doing. Here are the precious promises as cords of love to draw, and the awful threatenings to set idlers to work.

5. It is a sword to the Christian soldier, Ephesians 6:17. 'The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' Whoever has a mind for heaven must fight his way to it: for none get the crown but the conquerors, Revelation 3:21. They must go through many temptations, from the devil, the world, and the flesh; and the word is the sword for resisting them. It is an offensive and defensive weapon. We see how our Lord Jesus wielded it, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7. 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.--It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And whatever be our temptations, if we be well versed in the word, we may from thence bring answers to them all.

6. It is a counselor to those who are in straits, doubts, and difficulties, Psalms 119:24. 'Thy testimonies are--my counsellors.' Many a time the children of God, when tossed with doubts and fears, have found a quiet harbour there; and have got their way cleared to them there, when they knew not what to do. And no doubt, if we were more exercised unto godliness, and looking to the Lord in our straits, we would make more use of the Bible, as the oracles of Heaven.

7. It is a comforter to those that are cast down, Psalms 119:49-50. " Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.' The way to heaven lies through many tribulations, and afflictions are the trodden path to glory. But the Lord has left his people the Bible as a cordial to support them under all their pressures from within and without. And indeed the sap of the word, and the sweetness of the promises, are never more lively relished, than when the people of God are exercised under afflictions. Then does that heavenly fountain flow most plentifully, when, created streams being dried up, the soul goes for all to the Lord. To sum up all in one word,

8.Lastly, It is a cure for all diseases of the soul, Proverbs 4:22. 'My words are--health to all their flesh.' There is no malady that a soul is under, but there is a suitable remedy for it in the word, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:17. frequently quoted above, being adapted by infinite wisdom to the case of poor sinners. By it the simple may be made wise, the weak strengthened, the staggering confirmed, the hard heart melted, the shut heart opened, &c. it being the means the Spirit makes use of for these and all other such purposes.

Mot. 8. Consider the honourable epithets given to the scriptures. Amongst which I name only three.

1. The scriptures of truth, Daniel 10:21. Men may wrest the scriptures to patronize their errors, but the whole word of God is most pure truth. Here are no mistakes, no weaknesses, that adhere to all human composures. Here we may receive all that is taught us without hesitation. The hearers of men, or readers of their works, are divided into four sorts: Some like sponges, that suck up all, both good and bad: Some like sand glasses, who, what they receive at the one ear let go at the other: Some like a strainer, that lets all the good pass through, but keeps the dregs: Some like the sieve, that keeps the good grain, and lets through what is not worth. These last are only to be approved; but in the reading of the word we must be as the first sort.

2. Holy scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:15. They are the word of a holy God, from whom nothing can come but what is holy. It consists of holy commands, holy promises, holy threatenings, instructions, directions, &c. And holy hearts will love and reverence them for that very reason.

3.Lastly, The book of the Lord. What can be said more to commend it to us, if we have any regard to the Lord himself? If I could tell you of a book that fell down from heaven, and were to be had by any means, who would not be curious to have such a book and study it ? This is the book that contains the counsels of Heaven, and is given from Heaven to the church, to let men see the way to it.

Mot. last. Consider the danger of slighting the word. It exposes to sin, and consequently to the greatest danger. How can they keep the way of the word that do not study to acquaint themselves with it ? They must needs walk in darkness that do not make use of the light; and this leads to everlasting darkness, John 3:19. If by this word we must be judged, how can they think to stand that neglect it ?

I conclude with some directions for the study of the scriptures.

1. Keep an ordinary in reading them, that ye may be acquainted with the whole; and make this reading a part of your secret duties. Not that ye should bind up yourselves to an ordinary, so as never to read by choice, but that ordinarily this tends most to edification. Some places are more difficult, some may seem very bare for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on it all as God's word, not to be slighted, and read it with faith and reverence, no doubt ye would find advantage.

2. Set a special mark, one way or other, on those passages you read, which you find most suitable to your case, condition, or temptations; or such as ye have found to move your hearts more than other passages. And it will be profitable often to review these.

3. Compare one scripture With another, the more obscure with what which is more plain, 2 Peter 1:20. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the scriptures; and to this good use serve

the marginal notes on Bibles. And keep Christ in your eye, for to him the scriptures of the Old Testament (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices) look, as well as those of the New.

4. Read with a holy attention, arising from the consideration of the majesty of God, and the reverence due to him. This must be done with attention, (1.) To the words;(2.) To the sense: and (3.) To the divine authority of the scripture, and the bond it lays on the conscience for obedience, 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

5. Let your main end in reading the scriptures be practice, and not bare knowledge, James 1:22. Read that you may learn and do, and that without any limitation or distinction, but that whatever you see God requires, you may study to practise.

6. Beg of God and look to him for his Spirit. For it is the Spirit that dictated it, that it must be savingly understood, 1 Corinthians 2:11. And therefore before you read, it is highly reasonable you beg a blessing on what you are to read.

7. Beware of a worldly fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God; and the worldly heart cannot favour them. In an eclipse of the moon the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. So the world, in the heart, coming betwixt you and the light of the word, keeps its divine light from you.

8. Labour to be exercised unto godliness, and to observe your ease. For an exercised frame helps mightily to understand the scriptures. Such a Christian will find his case in the word, and the word will give light to his case, and his case light into the word.

9. Lastly, Whatever you learn from the word, labour to put it in practice. For to him that hath shall be given. No wonder they get little insight into the Bible, who make no conscience of practising what they know. But while the stream runs into a holy life, the fountain will be the more free.

S. The Utility of the Scripture as a Rule

THE UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES AS A RULE Doct. "The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God."

Here I shall only give the properties of this rule.

1. It is a perspicuous or clear rule. For though all things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due sense of ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

(1.) With respect to all things necessary to salvation, whether for faith or practice, it cannot be denied, but there are portions of the scripture very obscure, which possibly are not rightly interpreted even to this day; but in such things as are necessary to salvation, they are clear. And in this respect it hath been said, that the scriptures are a depth wherein a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim.

(2.) Though some things, the faith of which is necessary to salvation, be high and incomprehensible mysteries, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, &c. yet the way of propounding them is clear.

(3.) It may be that what is truly necessary unto salvation may be very obscurely laid down in some place of scripture; yet in some other place we shall find the same thing clearly propounded:

(4.) And that so as not only the learned, but even the unlearned, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them; which you must carefully remember is meant here of believing persons, who have the inward illumination of the Spirit, removing their own natural darkness: for if ye shall understand it of unbelievers, it contradicts what we have laid down above, relating to the necessity of spiritual illumination. And so the sense is, that not only may the learned, but even the unlearned Christian, attain to a sufficient understanding of the word;

(5.) Providing they make use of the ordinary means appointed of God for the understanding of them; reading attentively and devoutly with prayer and meditation on them, &c. This perspicuity of the scriptures I shall prove by the following arguments.

(1.) The scripture plainly teaches its own perspicuity and clearness in this sense. It is called a lamp and a light, Psalms 119:105. The very `entrance of it (it is said) gives light and understanding to the simple,' Psalms 119:130. See Proverbs 6:23. The apostle, 2 Peter 1:10. calls the holy scriptures a light, and particularly the word of prophecy, or the prophetic word, which of all the rest seems most dark, yet this he calls a light and a shining light, shining in a dark place; shewing thereby, that where it comes and shines, though the place be of itself dark, yet it dispels the darkness.

(2.) Such is the way God hath delivered his word, that its commands are not remote from the understanding; the meanest believer hath no reason to complain of the difficulty of it in the thiings necessary to salvation, Deuteronomy 30:11. &c. "For this command which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it in unto us, that we may hear it, and do it! But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

(3.) If all things necessary to salvation be understood by all sincere Christians, and this by virtue of the Spirit dwelling in every believer, then the scriptures are clear in all things necessary to salvation to the meanest believer. But the former is true: 1 Corinthians 2:15. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things;" 1 John 2:20, 1 John 2:27. "Ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but the same anointing teacheth you of all things." Consider to whom John is there speaking, not only to learned men and great divines, but to all believers, even to little children; to all that have the Spirit, which is commonto all; "for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

(4.) The things that are necessay to salvation are hid only to unbelievers, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes; as for others, God himself hath taught them, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

(5.) God hath promised to write his law in his people’s hearts, and that he himself will teach them to know himself, Jeremiah 31:33-34; therefore the scripture must needs be perspicuous and clear in things necessary to salvation: for that which is written in our hearts cannot be but clear unto us; and that which God himself teacheth us cannot be obscure, for who teacheth like God?

(6.) If the scriptures be not clear in themselves to all believers, but that all its perspicuity depends on the interpretation of the church, then our faith is to be ultimately resolved into the testimony of man; but that cannot be, for human testimony is not infallible and authentic, and therefore cannot found divine faith and an infallible persuasion. The reason of the consequence is clear. Hearers are obliged if they will not pin their faith on men’s sleeves, to compare the interpretations given by men, with the scriptures themselves; which is utterly unpracticable, unless the scriptures be clear in themselves in such things as are necessary to salvation.

(7.) The perspicuity of the scripture appears, fi ye consider their author, who is God himself, the Father of lights; and the end for which he gave the scriptures unto the church, viz. that they mights be a rule of faith and life. Of his power to speak plainly, who can doubt? and the end for which they are given may sufficiently satisfy as to his will to speak so; for how can they be a rule to us, if wrapt up so as we cannot understand them without the church’s interpretation, in those things that are necessary to salvation?

2. It is a perfect rule. There is nothing necessary to be believed or done but what is to be found there. It is a perfect rule for us to walk by in the way to heaven and glory. What can be more desired than that in the text, It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness? "The law of the Lord is perfect," Psalms 19:7. The scriptures were written that men

might have life, John 20:31. and comfort and hope in all conditions, Romans 15:4. But I insisted on this more fully in the preceding doctrine.

3. It is the only rule. Every doctrine taught any manner of way in religion must be brought to this rule, and if it agree not with it, must be rejected, Isaiah 8:20. Hereby traditions must be tried, Matthew 15:3; and spirits or revelations, 1 John 4:1; and nothing must be added to it, Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18. I shall shut up with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. The opinions of Fathers, decrees of councils, acts of assemblies, covenants, and minister's sermons, are not the rule of faith to us; nor can any of them bind us but in so far as they are agreeable to the word ofGod, by which all of them must be judged and examined, Isaiah 8:20.

2. Translations of the scriptures into the vulgar languages are most necessary and profitable. How otherwise should the unlearned read them, if they were not translated? It was by means of these translations that Romish Babel was brought down at the Reformation, as by the division of tongues the building of old Babel was hindered. And that makes the Papists such enemies to translations of the scriptures. We have reason to bless God for human learning, by which these translations are made, seeing the prophets and apostles wrote in languages which but few understand.

3. This may give us a just abhorrence of Popery, which almost in every point on this head casts dust on the scriptures. The Papists deny the necessity of translations; will not allow the people the free reading of the Bible; cry out on it for its obscurity; accuse it of imperfection; and add their traditions to it, that it may not be the only rule. And thus they blaspheme both God and his word, and expose themselves to that direful threatening, Revelation 22:18.

4. This may also give us a just detestation of Quakerism, which sets up the light within men, which in very deed is nothing but a natural conscience, and the spirit without the scriptures, to be a rule to men. But their light is but darkeness, and their spirit a spirit of darkness and delusion, if it agree not with the scriptures, Isaiah 8:20. and must be tried and examined by the scriptures, 1 John 4:1. The Quakers are a dangerous set of people that overturn the foundation of true religion.

5. This may likewise give us a just abhorrence of the superstition and ceremonies of the church of England, wherewith they have corrupted the worship of God, rejecting the simplicity of gosepel-worship, and regulating their worship in many things not by the scripture, but the dregs of Antichrist: Deuteronomy 4:2. "Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you." What word? Statutes, ver. 1 ceremonies and rites of worship. To baptize with water is Christ's command; but who has added the sign of the cross? Christ instituted the sacrament of the supper: but who has added kineeling, to overturn the table-gesture, which we have from Christ's own example? The Lord's day is of divine institution: but whose are the numerous holidays observed in the church of England? Matthew 15:9. What is all this but an accusing the scripture of imperfection, as if God had not laid down a sufficient rule to teach us how we may glorify him: as if they were ashamed of simple scripture-worship, but they deck it up in the whorish garments made by their own brains? God has a special zeal for his worship; and it becomes us to quicken our zeal for it, in a time when enemies are bringing in innovations in worship into this church, and setting up their Dagon beside the ark. But though God should, for our contempt of our pure worship, plague the land with this superstitious worship once more, yet as sure as Babylon shall fall, it shall fall and flee before the glory of the latter days.

6. Lastly, Be exhorted to study the holy scriptures. Read them in your families, and read them in secret, and cry for the holy Spirit, who dictated them, to make you understand them. Lock them not up in your chests, and let them not lie dusty in your windows, as too many do to their shame and disgrace, lest the dust of them witness against you. Prefer the Bible to all other books, as the book whereof God himself is the author. Prize and esteem it, as showing you the way to salvation, as a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths.

Chapter 130

S. The Wise Observation of Providences Illustrated and Enforced

THE WISE OBSERVATION OF PROVIDENCES ILLUSTRATED AND

ENFORCED.

Psalms 107:43 ---Whoso, is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

WHOSOEVER would walk with God, must be due observers of the word and providence of God, for by these in a special manner He manifests himself to his people. In the one we see what He says ; in the other what He does. These are the two books that every student of holiness ought to be much conversant in. They are both written with one hand, and they should both be carefully read, by those that would have not only the name of religion, but the thing. They should be studied together, if we would profit by either; for being taken together, they give light the one to the other; and as it is our duty to read the word, so it is also our duty to observe the work of God, Psalms 28:5. The one I formerly recommended ; and I am now to press the other, as a proper addition to our late discourse on the providence of God, from the text now read. Wherein we have two things.

1. The observing of providences recommended, Whoso is wise, In the Hebrew it runs, Who is wise, and will observe these things. Wherein we may observe, 1st, The duty itself recommended, observing these things. Where we are to consider the act and the object.

(1.) The object these things ; that is, the dispensations of providence. These are the things the Psalmist would have men to observe. For the design of this psalm is to praise God for his wonderful works of providence in the world, especially in the church. For this cause he sets before us, (1.) Wonderful deliverances wrought by providence, instanced in the seasonable relief given to, (1.) Needy and bewildered strangers, far from their own, Psalms 107:3. - 1 Samuel (2.) Captives and prisoners, Psalms 107:10 - Nehemiah (3.) Sick people at the gates of death, Psalms 107:17. - Song of Solomon (4.) To seafaring men in a storm, Psalms 107:23. - Jonah (2.) Strange and surprising changes in human affairs. (1.) Fruitful places made barren, and barren places fruitful. Psalms 107:33. - Habakkuk For an instance of which we need but consider this our own country, sometime a forest, for little use but to be a hunting-field, now comfortably maintaining many families, and useful to the nation by its great store. . (2.) Mean families raised by a blessing on their husbandry and store, and cast down again from their prosperity by cross providences, Psalms 107:36. - Malachi (3.) Those that were high in the world abased, and those that were mean and despicable raised to honour, Psalms 107:40-41. These turns of providence are of use to solace saints, and silence sinners, Psalms 107:42. Now, here is a field opened for serious observation. These and such like things we are called to notice.

(2.) The act, observation. We must not let providences pass without remark, but observe them carefully, as men that are neither fools nor atheists, but have eyes in their heads, and do not think the world is guided by blind chance, but by an infinitely wise God. The word signifies to take heed, and retain, as a watchman in a city does. We must take heed to them as they fall out, and carefully

keep them in mind, that they be not forgot, or slip out of our minds.

2dly, The qualification necessary to fit a man for this duty, wisdom. This is true spiritual wisdom ; for in scripture language all strangers to serious godliness are accounted fools, however sharpsighted otherwise they be. As for others, they neither will nor can rightly observe these things.

3dly, The manner of the expression. It intimates, (1.) That there are few so wise as to observe providences. Most part of the world are stupid on that point ; they let them go and come without notice, Jeremiah 9:12. (2.) That those who are truly wise will do it, Hosea 14:1-9. ult.

2. The advantage accruing from a wise observation of providences. They shall understand thereby the loving-kindness, goodness, and mercy of God, written out in his dispensations towards themselves and others; as we know how one stands affected to us by his behaviour towards us. I [is works will give us a clearer discovery of his glorious perfections ; and these observations will enrich us with experiences. It is remarkable that some of these things are cross providences; yet a right observation of them will shew us God’s kindness ; for the divine goodness may be seen in cross providences as well as in favourable ones. From the text I shall only observe one doctrine at present.

Doct. " It is the duty of Christians wisely to observe providences." This is a weighty point in practical religion, that requires observation in speaking to it, and practising it. In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew, I. What it is to observe providences wisely.

II. What are the objects about which we are to make our observations.

III. What we are to observe in them.

IV. The reasons why Christians should wisely observe providences.

V. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what it is to observe providences wisely. It presupposes some things, and imports some things.

First, It presupposes these four things.

1. That there is a providence. The world is not managed by fortune, nor do things fall out by blind chance. That there is a God, and that there is a providence, have been always looked on by men of sound judgment as certain maxims, establishing one another. And indeed to set up the creatures to act otherwise than under the providence of God, is to set them up for independent beings, that is, for gods. The scripture is plain that it reacheth all things, loin. xi. 36. ’ For of him, and through him, and to him are all things ;’ even from the greatest to the least, as ye will see from Matthew 10:29-31. ` Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ; and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.’ And unless it were so, how could He foresee and foretel things, Isaiah 46:10.

Some think this would disturb his repose, and is unworthy of him, and his purity and wisdom. But do not these atheists see the sun in the heavens undisturbed, with his (yet) universal influence,

shine on the dunghill as well as the garden, without contracting any spot? And is it unworthy of God to govern what He has created? As for the wisdom in the management of the world, they are fools who judge it folly before they see the end.

2. The faith of this providence. We must believe the doctrine of providence, if we would be wise observers thereof. The faith of the saints in this point may be shaken in an hour of temptation; as was the case with Asaph, Psalms 73:13-15. 'Verily (says he) I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus ; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.' And the unbelief of others therein makes them half atheists, Malachi 3:14-15 ' Ye have said, it is vain to serve God : and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts ? And now we call the proud happy ; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.' And the slender belief there is of it in the world makes men overlook providence, Habakkuk 1:16. `Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag : because by them their portion is fat and their meat plenteous.' Labour ye firmly to believe providence, that ye may observe it ; nay, believe it, and ye will observe it.

3. Providence has a language to the children of men. It is a clear part of the name of God whereby he manifests himself to the world, and has served to convince men of his eternal power and Godhead, whom no other arguments could reach: Dan. iv. ult. `Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' Psalms 19:3-4. ' There is no speech, nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' Rods have a language, Micah 6:9. '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.' And so also have mercies a language, Romans 2:4. `Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.' And providences being the work of a rational agent, they must have a design.

4. A disposition to understand the language and design of providence. It is for this end they are observed wisely, Micah 6:9. forecited. God speaks by providence, and the wise hearken by observation, that they may know what is meant by those characters, in which God writes his mind towards them. Hence the more one pursues communion with God, he will the more narrowly observe providence ; and when he grows remiss and negligent as to communion with God, he lets these things easily pass. But these are the prints of the Lord's feet, which one walking with God will set himself to observe.

Secondly, To observe providences wisely, imports these five things.

1. A watching for them till they come. Hence says the prophet, Habakkuk 2:1. 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.' This is to wait on the Lord in the way of his judgments, Isaiah 26:8. A practice necessarily following on the serious practice of godliness, in laying matters before the Lord by prayer, and depending on him according to his word, Psalms 130:1. Psalms 130:5-6. ' Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, 0 Lord. I wait for the Lord, and my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say more, than they that watch for the morning.' Some providences have a glaring light with them, that

cannot but strike the eye of the beholder ; but others not being so may pass unobserved, if people be not on their watch. Providence sometimes works long under ground, and wraps itself up in a long night of darkness; but the wise observer will wait the dawning of the day, and the setting up its head above ground, Psalms 69:3. 'Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God,' Lamentations 3:49-50. ` Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission : till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.' For they that believe will not make haste.

2. A taking heed to them, and marking them when they come, Isaiah 25:9. ' 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 be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' Heeding them, I mean, as from the hand of the Lord ; for though men heed the thing, if they do not heed the hand it comes from, they have but the carcase without the soul of providences. The threads of providence are sometimes so small and fine, and our senses so little exercised to discern, that they may come and go without our notice, Luke 19:44. `Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' Therefore the eyes of the wise man are in his head, to observe what comes from heaven; looking aforehand, and in the time ; for he that looks sees, Ezekiel 1:15, Zechariah 6:1

3. A serious review of them, pondering and narrowly considering them. We should not only look to them, but into them, Psalms 111:2. ' The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.' And the more we see of them, the more of God we will see in them ; for the further we wade in these waters, the deeper. Providence is a wheel within a wheel, a piece of the nice workmanship of heaven, which may make us cry out with wonder many a time, 0 wheel! Ezekiel 10:13. The design of providence oftentimes lies hid, not to be seen at first view; but we must look again and again, and narrowly inspect it, ere we can comprehend it. It is a mystery many times, looking at which our weak eyes will begin to dazzle. And that we may unravel the clue by a sanctified judgment, Psalms 77:6. it will be needful to call in the help of prayer, with much humility, faith, and self-denial, Job 10:2. and of the scripture, Psalms 73:16.

4. Laying them up, and keeping them in record, Luke 1:66. We should keep them as one would do a treasure, for the time to come, Then are they experiences, which will be notable provision for aftertimes. 0, if these observations were wisely made, and carefully laid up, the former part of our life might furnish noble helps for the latter part of it; and the longer we lived, the richer would we be in this spiritual treasure : even as in war one victory helps to get another. And the old disciple might have a body of practical experimental divinity in his head, drawn forth from his own observation. We find David, when young, improving providences formerly thus observed, 1 Samuel 17:37. '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;' and when old doing the same, Psalms 37:25. ' I have been young, and now am old yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'

5. Lastly, It is a practical observation of them. They who observe providences wisely do not observe them only to clear their judgments, and inform their understandings, as by matters of speculation ; but to influence their hearts and affections in the conduct of their life, Micah 6:9. The more that one wisely observes providence, he will be the more holy. The observing the work of providence about himself and others, will advance the work of grace in the heart, and holiness in the life, Romans 5:4. ' Patience worketh experience ; and experience hope,' Psalms 64:7, Psalms

64:9. ’ God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider his doing.’ It is a woful observation of providence, when it has no good effect on people to make them better.

Hence Moses says to the Israelites, Deuteronomy 29:2-4. ’ Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his laud ; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles : yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.’ But it is yet worse when people are made worse thereby, as in the case of him who said, ’ Behold this evil is of the Lord, what ! should I wait for the Lord any longer ?’ 2 Kings 6:33. But it is a kindly effect of it when men accommodate their spirits to the divine dispensations they are under, according to that, Ecclesiastes 7:14. ’ In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider.’

II. I come now to speak of the objects about which we are wisely to make our observations, these things. This is a spacious field, as broad as the universe, or the whole creation, so far as we come to the knowledge any manner of way of the works of God. For providence reacheth to all things, and in every thing the finger of God is to be seen. None of all God’s works of providence laid open to our view are excepted, nor allowed to be overlooked, Psalms 28:5. And all of them may be profitably noticed. But more particularly, I shall offer you a sample of the admirable web of providence ; a sample, I say, for how small a part of his ways do we know ? The dispensations of providence may be considered, 1. With respect to their objects.

2. With respect to their kinds.

3. With respect to the time of their falling out.

FIRST, Providences may be considered with respect to their objects, which are all the creatures and all their actions. And here let us,

FIRST, Look into the invisible world, and trace providence a little there. It becomes Christians to cause their eye to follow there where God’s hand is before them at work. David tells us, Psalms 139:8. ’ If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there : if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.’ God is there with his hand of providence, Psalms 139:10. ’Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.’ And the apostle gives the Christian that character, 2 Corinthians 4:18. that ’he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are’ not seen.’

First, Look to the lower part of that world, the kingdom of darkness, and there you see devils and damned spirits of men, with the providence of God about them in an awful manner. A fearful web of providence encompasses them.

1. Concerning devils, view the awful providences they are under, and observe,

(1.) How these once glorious creatures are now irrecoverably lost, and reserved to a certain and dreadful judgment, 2 Peter 2:4.Jude 1:6. Behold and learn the severity of God’s justice from this his work; how no natural excellency will preserve the creature from wrath when once defiled with sin. They were the first that ventured to break over the hedge of the holy law, and God set them up for dreadful examples to the whole creation. Behold the power of God, whose hands devils themselves cannot rid themselves out of. And understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, in

providing a Saviour for man, and not for them, Hebrews 2:16.

(2.) How, notwithstanding, these malicious creatures are not so pent up in their prison, but they are permitted to go about through the world; yet this world is generally inhabited without molestation from them. Only now and then, in some very rare cases, they are suffered to molest men, by a particular providential permission as in the case of Job 2:1-13. This general case of the world is a continued wonder of providence. How is it that ever we get any rest from them in house or field? It is not for want of will or natural power, but from the restraint of providence upon them, continued upon them, notwithstanding the world's wickedness. Observe this thankfully, and understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

2. Concerning damned spirits, who are in hell under the wrath of God, see the awful providences about them, and observe how miserable they are, Luke 16:23. being `punished from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thessalonians 1:9. all hopes of recovery being now lost for ever. And learn how precious time is, that what we have to do, ye may do quickly: how deceitful sin and the world are ; and how severely God punishes at length, though he may long bear with sinners. And understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, that ye are yet in the land of the living, under means of grace, and hopes of glory.

Secondly, Look to the upper part of the invisible world, the regions of bliss ; and there you will see angels and the spirits of just men made perfect wrapt up in a glorious web of providence, sparkling with goodness and mercy. See the Larger Catechism chi Providence.

Concerning the blessed angels, observe,

1. How they are established in holiness and happiness, 1 Timothy 5:21. They were of the same changeable nature with those that fell ; but God held them up, and has confirmed them, that they cannot fall now. And learn the power of sovereign grace, which can establish one tottering creature when another falls ; and how happy they are who cheerfully do the will of God, for so the angels do in heaven. Though proud shining hypocrites fall away and perish, yet trembling saints shall be made to stand.

2. How they are employed in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice, 2 Kings 19:35. In one night the angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand, Hebrews 1:14. ' Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?' God sends them to take care of his children, who no doubt receive many benefits off their hands, which they are not sensible of. Understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in sending them, and their love to God and man in taking such employment. The living creatures have the wheels going by them.

Concerning the souls of the blessed, observe how blessed and happy they are in the enjoyment of God, where no clouds interpose betwixt them and the light of his countenance, Hebrews 12:23. Luke 16:22. And learn here what a vain thing this world is, and how we may be happy without it, yea cannot be completely happy till we be beyond it. What a rich harvest the seed of grace in the soul brings in, and how holiness leads the way to complete happiness. Wonderful is the loving-kindness of the Lord, that takes those who serve him here, to be his attendants in his palace and brings them to the full enjoyment of himself in glory.

Let this suffice for a sample of providence in the invisible world.

SECONDLY, Look to the visible world, and trace providence there. See how the hand of the Lord is constantly at work about these his creatures which he has made, John 5:17. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

1. Consider the inanimate or lifeless creatures, which are the objects of providence as well as other things. They are not capable of self-governing, but he that made them guides them to their ends. The heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars, are under the government of wise providence. They got their orders at first, Genesis 1:16.

'God made two great lights ; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night : be made the stars also.' And they have still observed these orders since. Psalms 104:19. ' He appointeth the moon for seasons : the sun knoweth his going down.' Sometimes indeed by a particular commission, they have altered their ordinary course as in Joshua's time, Joshua 10:12-13, when the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, for a whole day ; but they returned to their course again. The sun keeps his course allotted him by the divine decree; for should he go at random, our earth would either be burnt or quite frozen up, that we could not live on it. 0 the loving-kindness of the Lord, that makes the very heavenly bodies punctually to keep pace with our necessities, and has not avenged himself on men's disorders, by suffering these to go into disorder and confusion ! The raging sea is under the management of providence. God manages it as easily as the nurse does the infant, whom she swaddles and lays in its cradle, from whence it cannot get out, while she will have it to stay there ; Job 38:11. `Hitherto shalt thou come (says Providence to this unruly element), but no farther ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' 0 look to his work and learn his loving-kindness, Psalms 104:24-26. ' 0 Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all : the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.' Behold his greatness, and adore him, Matthew 8:27. 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?' Fear before such a mighty One, Isaiah 28:2. And let it quiet your hearts under all the tossings ye meet with in the world ; for it will cost him but to say, ' Peace and be still;' Psalms 93:4. ' The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.' The air and wind, which no man can lay hold of, are entirely under the conduct of Providence, John 3:8. ' The wind bloweth where it listeth,' in respect of man ; but in respect of God, where he listeth, Matthew 8:27. forecited. What a wonder is it, (not to speak of tempests, hail, rain, snow, &c. Psalms 147:15-18), that such a thin invisible body should bear up all the fowls of the air, the heavy clouds also, and carry them from place to place, so that we may say, as Psalms 18:10. 'He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind ! How then can our God be at a loss for means to support us ? He has filled the world with it; it is about us, in us, in our nostrils, in our bowels, nay, in every pore of our bodies ; yea, without it we could not breathe, yet we see it not. Shall we then think it strange, that the God who made it is every where present ? Nay, lie is without and within us, though we see him not. If lie mix pestilential vapours with it, we are dead men, as if poison were mixed with our drink : for at every breathing we draw it in; so entirely do we depend on the Lord. 0 then understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in this respect. The earth is under the care and government of the same wise Providence. He made it, and that was a great work ; he preserves it and governs it, and

that is another. He supports it, Hebrews 1:3. The earth bears us, but what bears the earth ? You cannot think it is infinite or boundless, and therefore it must have another side opposite to that we are on. Yes, and by the powerful providence of God it hangs like a ball in the air, Job 26:7. ` He hangeth the earth upon nothing.' 0 then, is there any thing too hard for our God to do ? He fills it with his riches, the surface of it, and the bowels of it, Psalms 104:24. But what is most necessary for men's use is on the surface of it, easiest to be come at, Job 28:1-28. He feeds it, that it may feed us, Deuteronomy 11:11. Hosea 2:21-22. When the strength thereof is weakened with new influences from the heavens, he renews it, Psalms 104:30. And since the flood, the promise then given, Genesis 8:22. that ' while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease,' has been punctually performed. 0 understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in these things, what a gracious and bountiful God he is ! And learn bow surely all his promises to his people shall be accomplished.

2. Consider the vegetative part of the world, things that have life, but not sense, such as trees, plants, &c. how Providence cares for and manages them. Our Lord calls us to observe these things, and thereby understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, Matthew 6:28. ' Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow : they toil not, neither do they spin.' Lilies of the field have not the care of man about them, as those of the garden, but Providence cares for them. This teaches us to lay by anxiety, and trust God, Matthew 6:30. See how the earth is kindly furnished with vegetables by providence, not only for men's necessity, but their conveniency and delight, Psalms 104:14, - Esther And shall not this good God be loved and cheerfully served by us ? Every pile of grass is a preacher of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

3. Consider the sensitive part of the world, such as have life and sense, but not reason ; as birds, beasts, and fishes. And observe what a vast family are maintained on the Creator's cost. And though we cannot trust providence, yet what an innumerable company there is of dependents on mere providence ! Psalms 104:27. ' These all wait upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.' Observe this provision, and thence learn to believe even where ye cannot see, Matthew 6:26, ' Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?' For Providence does for them that have none to do for them ; Psalms 147:9. 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry.' Observe how providence has subjected them to man as servants that could easily be his masters in respect of strength, as the horse, ox, &c. yet the face of man strikes a damp upon them, which is the more remarkable, that man by sin did forfeit his dominion over the creatures. But this must be resolved into the virtue of that word, executed daily by providence, Genesis 9:2. 'The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea.' 0 what a power is in a word of divine appointment '?

4. Consider the rational part of the world, men having life, sense, and reason. In these providence shews itself most brightly. Man is the compend of the creation, having a spirit as angels are spirits, and a body with the rest. And he is the peculiar care of Heaven. This is the main object of our observation.

1st, We should observe the dispensations of providence towards societies; and the nearer our relation to them be, we should observe them the more narrowly.

(1.) Towards societies of men in the world, kingdoms, churches, congregations, families, &c.

[1.] Much of the power, wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. of God, might be learned from the revolutions and changes in states and kingdoms, which should make us inquisitive for the knowledge of public affairs. And 0 what a glorious scene of providence has been opened of late in Britain, shining with illustrious mercy to the church and nation, in delivering us when at the brink of ruin; depth of wisdom, in baffling in a moment the cunning projects of enemies ; almighty power, in so easily crushing their towering hopes; radiant justice, in making the stone tumble down on the heads of those that rolled it, and making enquiry for the blood of the saints shed many years ago.

[2.] Providences toward the church of God are mainly to be observed, 1 Samuel 4:13. The angels themselves notice these, to learn something from them, Ephesians 3:10. What concerns the church is the greatest work on the wheel of providence ; and in most, if not all the great works of God through the world, he has in them an eye to his church. As she is for God, so other things are for her.

Particularly we should observe the way of providence towards the church of Scotland, whereof we are members ; which has been as admirable a mixture of mercy and judgment, as perhaps any church since the apostles days has met with. How high has she been raised in peace and purity, and how low laid at other times ! How often has she been at the brink of ruin, and wonderfully preserved ? How have her faithful friends been signally owned of God, and her enemies often borne the evident marks of God's displeasure ! &c. And yet, more particularly,

We should observe the way and aspect of providence towards the congregation, how the Lord has been and is dealing with us, that we may accommodate ourselves to his dispensations, and answer the call of them.

[3.] Towards families. Sometimes the Lord causes a warm sunshine of prosperity on families, and sometimes the heavens are louring above them ; they have their risings and fallings, as all other societies in this changeable world, as is beautifully described by the Psalmist, Psalms 107:38-39, Psalms 107:41. ` He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.' How does Job mournfully observe the way of providence with his family, Job 29:2. - Deuteronomy and David on his death-bed the humbling circumstances of his ! 2 Samuel 23:5.

There are few of our families but God has of late one way or other visited them ; his voice has cried to our houses, as well as to the land. It is our duty to observe the same, read the language of it, and comply with the design thereof.

2dly Towards particular persons ; for we may learn something from God's way with every one. And,

(1.) Towards others, whether godly or wicked. This was the Psalmist's practice to have his eyes in his head, and to look about him in the world, and learn something for his own establishment, both from the harms and happiness of others, Psalms 37:35. - Haggai

' I have seen the wicked in great power; and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect

man, and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace.' It is observable, that the holy scripture is not written as a system of precepts, with the reasons of them; but the body of it is a cluster of examples, wherein we may see, as in a glass, what we are to follow if we would be happy, and what we are to shun, Romans 15:4. ' For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' A plain evidence, that whoso would please God, must observe those things that are set before his eyes in providence.

(2.) Towards ourselves in particular. These providences come nearest us, and therefore should be most narrowly observed. In these we are the parties to whom God directs his speech immediately ; but, alas ! often it is not observed, Job 33:14. ` For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not.' There is none of us that are not the objects of wonderful providences, but especially true Christians, who may well say, as Psalms 40:5. ` Many, 0 Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward : they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' We might each of us fill a volume with accounts of the wonderful works of God, and yet confine ourselves to what has happened to ourselves, if we hard but the wisdom to observe the same. Every moment we would be a wonder to ourselves, if we could but discern the beautiful mixture of that web of providence wherein every moment we are wrapt up.

(1.) Let us observe how we are powerfully preserved by Providence, Hebrews 1:3. Psalms 36:6. ' Lord, thou preservest man and beast.' When we consider how unlike our souls are to our bodies, we may more wonder at the continuance than the breach of that union. When we think how death has as many gates to come in by, as our body has pores, how the seeds of a thousand diseases are in our bodies, what a train of perishing principles they are made up of, how easily, while we walk amidst the creatures of God here, fire may be set to the train, and the house of clay quickly blown up, we may say there is something more astonishing in our life than in our death. And it must be a powerful providence that preserves this life of ours, as a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean of water, or as a bag of powder amidst sparks of fire flying on every hand.

Besides, bow few of us are there, but sometimes there has been but as a hair-breadth betwixt death and us, by reason either of diseases or unforeseen accidents, which we could not therefore ward off. So that we might say of our preservation, This is the finger of God.

What remarkable deliverances has the Lord wrought for some by unordinary means, as Jonah preserved by a whale, and Elijah fed by the ravens !

(2.) How we are holily, wisely, and powerfully governed by Providence, our persons and actions disposed of according to his will, either in mercy or in wrath, Daniel 4:35. `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 dolt thou ?' Psalms 135:6. ' Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' While we sail the sea of this world, we may well perceive, that it is not we ourselves, but holy providence that guides the ship : Jeremiah 10:23. ` 0 Lord, (says the prophet), I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' And while men will not see this, to engage them to a life of holiness, faith, and dependance on God, they are often made to feel it, by their dashing on rocks, to the bruising, if not to the splitting of them, Isaiah 26:11.

’ Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed.’ Let me instance here but in two things, to shew that God sits King, and rules among men.

(l.) Man proposeth, but God disposeth, Lamentations 3:37. ’ Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not ?’ How often are men’s towering hopes levelled with the ground in a moment ? Their projects are laid with all the wit and industry they are capable of, managed with all diligence and circumspection, so that they cannot see how they can misgive, but must take effect according to their wish. But he that sits in heaven, in a moment looses a pin, and all the fabric falls to the ground, their projects are baffled, their measures disconcerted, sonic stroke of providence, which ungodly men call an unlucky accident, mars all. This was evident in Haman’s case. Sometimes it is done by an invisible hand, whereby the wheels are taken off, that they can drive no farther, Job 20:26. ` All darkness shall be hid in his secret places : a fire not blown shall consume him ; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.’]low often do men find their greatest cross where they looked for their greatest comfort ! and things turn about quite the contrary way to what was their design.

(2.) Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity, Genesis 22:14. How often does the Lord begin his work where man ends his, and can do no more ? When men know not what to do, God opens a door ; and when they have no firm ground of their own left to stand upon, he sets their foot on a rock, Psalms 107:27-28. ` They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.’ Their hopes are disappointed, but their fears and desperate conclusions are prevented. Something threatens them a stroke, which they see not how to escape ; but an invisible arm wards off the blow; and what they look for their ruin in, there they find by an over-ruling providence, healing and upmaking, Esther 9:1. What is most unlikely is brought about, while the fairest hopes are made like the blossom that goes up as dust. Thus God baffles men’s hopes on the one hand, and their fears on the other, that they may see, there is a wheel within a wheel that moves and guides all.

SECONDLY, We may consider providences with respect to their kinds, Psalms 40:5. forecited. The wisdom of God is manifold wisdom, and produces works accordingly, Psalms 104:24. And each of them is to be observed. I will instance in these three distinctions of providence.

First, Providences are either cross, or smiling and favourable. Both ought to be observed, and may be so profitably.

1. We should observe cross providences that we or others meet with. They come not by chance, but under the guidance of a holy sovereign God, Job 5:6. ’Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.’ Amos 3:6. `Shall there be an evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it ?’ God makes himself known by them, his justice, truth, holiness, wisdom, and power, Psalms 9:16. `The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.’ And he requires us to observe them, Micah 6:9. ’ hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.’ And it is a horrible provocation not to observe them, Isaiah 26:11. forecited, and not to comply with the design of them; to murmur, but not kindly mourn under them, Job 35:9-10. and Job 36:13. Sometimes men meet with crosses in the way of their duty, Galatians 6:17. and sometimes in the way of sin, as Jonah. The design of both is to purge away sin, Isaiah 27:9. But, without observations, the plaister is not applied to the sore.

2. Smiling and favourable providences towards ourselves or others, Psalms 40:5. Many, in their observations of providence, are like the flies that pass over the sound places, and swarm about the sores. They are still complaining of their crosses and sorrows, and will nicely reckon them up : but as to their mercies, they will not go the length of the unjust steward, of a hundred to set down fifty, Luke 16:6. They have their language, but it cannot be understood without observation, Romans 2:4. Dependance on God, and humility of heart, would teach us carefully to observe our mercies, Lamentations 3:22. Genesis 32:10. even when we are meeting with heavy crosses, Job 1:21.

Secondly, There are great lines and small lines of providence. And,

1. We should observe the great lines of providence in signal events. Some dispensations bear such a signature of a divine hand, and so flash like lightning on men's face, that one can hardly miss to observe, but must say, as Exodus 8:19. ` This is the finger of God.' 2 Chronicles 26:19-20. `Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand, to burn incense : and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon hint, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence, yea, himself basted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.' It is rare that God leaves himself without a witness, by some such signal providences ; yet such is the perverseness of the heart of man, that as the blind cannot observe the flash of lightning, even these are lightly looked at, 1 Samuel 6:9.

2. The small lines of providence. The most minute things are guided by the all-ruling hand, Matthew 10:29-30. And if God do manage them, it becomes us to notice them. All the king's coin, from the massiest piece of gold to the smallest penny, bears the king's image and superscription, and therefore the least as well as the greatest is current in trade. So the smallest lines of providence pass current with those that keep a trade with heaven. Gideon notices his hearing a fellow tell a dream, Judges 7:13, &c. He-man, the removing of an acquaintance, Psalms 138:8. and Jacob, a kind word, the shew of his brother's countenance, Genesis 33:10.

Thirdly, There are common and uncommon providences.

1. We should observe common and ordinary dispensations, such as fall out every day in the common road of providence. These, because they are common, lie neglected : yet the 104th Psalm is penned on that subject. I have observed to you already, how providence appears in the constant revolutions of seasons, day and night ; by the one the weary earth is refreshed, and by the other weary man, the night being fit for rest. The subjection of the beast, to man, by virtue of that divine word, Genesis 9:2. forecited, without which man could not have his necessary designs served. I add, that wonderful diversity of faces and features, without which the man could not know his wife, nor the parents their own children, nor the judge the criminal; so that without this there could be no orderly society, no government, commerce, &c. These are a sample of common providences, which studied might be of great use.

2. Uncommon and unordinary providences, as miracles, which are beyond the power of nature ; extraordinary deliverances, judgments, discoveries of secret crimes; which are bright spots here and there interspersed in the web of providence, and challenge a peculiar regard.

THIRDLY, we may consider providences with respect to the time of their falling out. The works of providence run parallel with the line of time, and the continuance of the world, John 5:17.

1. We should observe the past dispensations of providence, Psalms 77:5. ' I have considered the days of old, (says Asaph), the years of ancient times.' An observer of providence must look off unto others, look into himself, and, with respect to himself and others, look back also.

(1.) Past providences towards others afford a large field for observation, reaching from the creation till now, Psalms 143:5. ' I remember the days of old,' says David. He remembered how the Lord dealt with Nimrod, Abimelech, Pharaoh, &c. What a chain of wise providences has encompassed the world in the several generations thereof? what a beautiful mixture of providences has always appeared towards the church, while the mystery of God, not yet finished, has been a carrying on ! What very remarkable things have fallen out in the life and death of particular persons ! From all the particulars of these we might draw something for our spiritual advantage, as the bee from every flower extracts her honey.

(2.) Past providences towards ourselves in particular afford also a large field, reaching from our first being till now. Look back and consider that wonderful providence that framed thee in the womb, Job 10:10-11. The Psalmist finds himself in a transport of wonder upon this reflection, Psalms 139:14, &e. Consider how the same kind providence brought thee safe out of the womb, that the womb was not made thy grave, or that thou wast not stifled in the birth, Psalms 22:9. How thou wast provided for and preserved from the dangers in infancy, by the same kind providence, whilst thou couldest do nothing for thyself, Psalms 22:9-10. Observe the providences of God towards thee in thy childhood, youth, middle age, and forward to the present time ; and thou must say as old Jacob, Genesis 48:15. `God fed me all my life long unto this day;' and with the Psalmist, Psalms 71:17. ' 0 God thou hast taught me from my youth.' Observe how God gave thee such and such education, ordered thy lot in such and such a place in his earth, and in such sort as He has done, how He brought thee into such and such company, saved thee from such and such dangers, &c.

2. We should observe the present dispensations of providence towards ourselves and others, Zechariah 6:1-2. It is a stream that still runs by us, like those rivers that bring down the golden ore, Psalms 65:11. By day nor night it ceaseth not, Psalms 19:2. Providence with the one hand bids us stoop and take on the day's load of benefits, Psalms 68:19. and with the other hand lays on the day's burden of evils, Matthew 6:1-34. ult. And therefore that is our duty, Psalms 4:4. ' Commune with your own hearts upon your bed and be still;' that having made our observations through the day, we may cast up our accounts against night.

Thus far of the objects on which we are to make observations.

III. The next general head is, to shew what we are to observe in providences. It is not enough to observe the work itself, but we must be as particular as we can about it. This is like the bruising of the spices and the pouring out of the ointment, whereby their fragrancy is best perceived. There are these nine things I recommend to your observation.

1. The timing of providences, the great weight of a dispensation sometimes lies in this very circumstance, that then it came, and neither sooner nor later. And 0 the admirable wisdom that appears in thus jointing of then' Genesis 24:45. Abraham's servant prays to be guided to the

woman appointed to be Isaac's wife ; and in the very time Rebekah comes. Gideon in the very time when he comes near the enemy's camp, hears one of them telling his dream, Judges 7:13, &c. Uzziah is smitten in the very time when he is attempting to offer incense upon the altar of incense. And here particularly observe the timing of providences,

(1.) with respect to the frame of our spirit; for much lies in observing what frame of spirit a mercy or stroke overtakes us in. So the church observes the timing of her deliverance, that it came when they were not looking for it, Psalms 126:1. And that made it look the greater. Job observes, that his trouble came on him when he was far from security, and that made him wear it the better, Job 3:1-26. ult. Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar's trouble began when their hearts had quite forgot God, and that made the heavy hand of God the heavier. 0 notice carefully what frame of spirit your mercies or crosses find you in ; ye will see much in that.

(2.) With respect to your circumstances. How often does kind providence catch the child at the very halting, Psalms 94:18. and an angry God set fire on people's nest just when they had well feathered it, and throw them down when they are just come to their height ? Job 20:23. So He did with holy Job, Job 29:18. Observe it, and y e will find either a sting or a sweet ingredient in what you meet with.

There is a piece of holy foresight that an exercised Christian may have by observing the timing of a dispensation. If thou be such an one, and wouldst know whether a mercy thou hast got will last or no, how was it timed; came it to thee when thy spirit was weaned, lying at the Lord's feet ? Thou hast a sure hold of it. But came it when thy spirit was upon the fret, unhumbled, unsubdued, and thou wouldest needs have it ? It will stick short while in thy hand, Psalms 18:17-18. Hosea 13:11. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence ere it be ripe, will last short while, and set their teeth on edge while they have it.

2. The beginnings and dawnings of providences, Psalms 130:6. My soul,' says the Psalmist, ' waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning.' So did those mentioned, Luke 1:66. All they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be ?' Sometimes a work that God has upon the wheel of providence will be but like the cloud, as big as a man's hand ; but being observed, it will spread. Good Jacob observed the dawnings of providence in Joseph's case, though he little knew what a bright day it would end in, Genesis 37:11. It may be long betwixt the beginning and the end ; but it is good to notice, as the holy penman does, the door of hope a little after the midnight of the captivity, Jeremiah 52:31. There is a great advantage in being able to follow the thread of providence from the beginning of it.

3. The progress of providence, endeavouring always to notice the several steps of it, Luke 2:19. and Luke 2:51. and to follow the thread. For God ordinarily brings great works to pass by degrees, that so men that are weak may have the greater advantage for observation, Hosea 6:3. Mercies and strokes may be long a-working, the decree may go long ere it bring forth : but much of the wisdom of God may be seen in the several steps it takes, and the advances it makes.

4. The turns of providence. The wheel of providence is a wheel within a wheel, and sometimes it runs upon the one side, and sometimes on the other. Observe the change of the sides. For providence to our view has many turnings and windings, and yet really it is going straight forward, Zechariah 14:7. It runs fast to the evening with the church there ; but behold the turn, ' In the

evening it shall be light.' See the turn of the wheel in Joseph's case, Genesis 41:14. in Pharaoh's taking him from prison ; in the church's case, Esther 6:3-4. in Ahasuerus's inquiring whether any honour had been done to Mordecai for his discovering a plot formed against the king's life ; and in that of Hagar and Ishmael, Genesis 21:17. in the angel's calling to them out of heaven, to know what ailed them. And ye may see the wheel ordinarily turns at the brow of the hill.

5. The end of providence, James 5:11. There seemed to be many dismal circumstances in Job's case, concurring to his ruin. His substance goes, his family, his health and ease ; his wife bids him blaspheme and die ; his friends represent his case as that of an hypocrite ; many a black thread appears in the web : but 0 what a beautiful piece does it appear when it is wrought out ! Job 13:10, Job 13:12.

6. The mixture of providence. The unmixed dispensation is reserved for another world ; there is mercy unmixed, Revelation 22:1. and judgment unmixed, Revelation 14:10. But here all we meet with is mixed. There is never a mercy we get, but there is a cross in it ; and never a cross, but there is a mercy in it. Observe the mixture of your mercies, to make you humble and heavenly; for the fairest rose that grows here has a prickle with it, and there is a tartness in our sweetest enjoyments. Observe the mixture of your crosses, to make you patient and thankful ; for the bitterest pill God gives you to swallow has a vehicle of mercy, Lamentations 3:22. ` It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' And wise observers will see many mercies in one cross, if they will but allow themselves to see how God could and might have made it worse.

7. The concurrence of providences. Sometimes several dispensations of providence meet together in one's case. One while there may be a meeting of several mercies together, which make a golden spot of time among them to a person. At other time several afflictions meet together, one wave comes on the back of another, till the furnace is by several coals heated seven times. Job had experience of both in his case, a train of troubles first, and a train of mercies succeeded. Jacob, when he came homeward to Canaan, had a train of troubles that waited on him. And in the case of the people of God, a very fair blink forebodes a heavy shower. The duty in that case is, ' In the day of prosperity be joyful ; but in the day of adversity consider,' Eccl. vii. 14. Sometimes there is a meeting of several kinds, and one gets his bed strewed with a rose and a thorn, &c.

8. The design and language of providences, Micah 6:9. They are the works of infinite wisdom, and therefore cannot be without a design. And seeing God speaks to us by his providences, and we ought to hear and obey when he speaks, we should be very careful to know the meaning of dispensations, that we may fall in with the call of providence. And the Lord takes it heinously ill if we do not, Jeremiah 7:7. If it be dark and doubtful let us lay it before the Lord in prayer, set it in the light of the word, and meditate on it till we find it out, Psalms 73:16-17.

9. Lastly, The harmony of providences. There is a fourfold harmony to be observed in providences.

1st., Their harmony with the word, which they agree with as the copy with the original. The sealed book of God's decrees is opened in providences. Hence that of the opening the seals, in the Revelation. And the book of the scripture is written over again in providence, so that as in water face answereth to face, so do God's works to his word, Psalms 48:8. Providence is a most regular building, and the word is the draught of that building. Providence is a curious piece of embroidery,

and the word is the pattern. So that in providence the word has been a-fulfilling ever since it was given, and still it is a-fulfilling, and the pattern will be wrought out when the mystery of God is finished, and not till then, Matthew 5:18. And thus it is a-fulfilling, not only by the extraordinary but ordinary providences. If a man quarrel any thing in a building or embroidery, there must be a comparing it with the draught or pattern of the house or embroidery, and he will be satisfied. Psalms 73:16-17.

Ye will never observe providences aright, if ye do not observe their harmony with the word ; for the word is the instituted means of the conveyance of influences, Isaiah 59:1-21. ult. By neglecting of this, some dispensations prove stumbling-blocks, over which some break their necks, Malachi 3:15. Many draw harsh and ungodly conclusions against others, whereby they only discover their own ignorance of the scriptures, and of the method of providence, Luke 13:1. - Deuteronomy John 9:2-3. like Job's censorious uncharitable friends, Job 5:1. .

0 Sirs, learn this lesson, that all providences which you, or I, or any person or society in the world meet with, are accomplishments of the scripture. And they may be reduced to and explained by one of these five things. Either they are accomplishments of,

(1.) Scripture-doctrines, Psalms 48:8. ' As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.' May not every one see, that few great men are good men ? Do not stumble at it ; it is but a fulfilling of the scripture, 1 Corinthians 1:26. ` Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' That the safest condition for the soul is the medium between great wealth and pinching poverty, according to Agur's prayer, Proverbs 30:8-9. ` Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me : lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain. ' That Satan and the corruptions of the heart are sometimes most busy, when people are setting themselves to serve the Lord, agreeable to Paul's experience, Romans 7:21. ' I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. ' That the generality of the hearers of the gospel are not savingly wrought on by it, according to these scripture-passages, Isaiah 53:1. `Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?' Matthew 22:14. ' Many are called, but few are chosen.' And so in other cases. Or of, (2.) Scripture-prophecies, 1 Timothy 1:18. 1 This I commit unto thee,

0 Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee.' What astonishing providences were the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the expulsion of the Canaanites, Cyrus' overturning the Babylonian empire, and loosing the captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans ? But all these were but a fulfilling of scripture-prophecies. What an astonishing providence was the rise, reign, and continuance of the Antichristian kingdom, and the reformation of religion in many nations, after they had lain many hundreds of years under Popish darkness; These are the fulfilling of the apocalyptic prophecies. And what an astonishing providence was the introduction of the gospel into Britain, and the preservation of it hitherto, amidst so many attempts to destroy it ? It is an accomplishment of that prophecy, Isaiah 13:4. ' The isles shall wait for his law.' Or of,

(3.) Scripture-promises, Joshua 21:45. ' There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass,' Psalms 119:5. ' Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, 0 Lord, according unto thy word.' You see the orderly revolutions of the year, and seasons thereof; that is the fulfilling of the scripture, Genesis 8:22. That those who have suffered

loss in the cause of Christ, have been bountifully treated with so much in hand, that they have had more content and inward satisfaction in that, than any other time of their life, is a fulfilling of scripture, Mark 10:29-30. ' 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 hundred-fold 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. ' That the way of duty has been not only the most honourable but the safest way, is an accomplishment of scripture-promises, Proverbs 10:9. ' He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.' Proverbs 16:7. ' When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' That communion with God is to be had in ordinances, is conformable to promise, Exodus 20:24. ' In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' Or of,

(4.) Scripture-threatenings, Leviticus 10:3. ' This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified.' Hosea 7:12. ' I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.' You may observe how dangerous it is to meddle for the ruin of the work and people of God, from that passage, Micah 4:11-12. 'Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel : for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.' How their faces are covered with shame that despise the Lord, from 1 Samuel 2:30. The Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me ; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'-flow the faster people slave to their temporal comforts, they have the looser hold, from Ezekiel 24:25. ` I will take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters. 'How people may run long in an evil way, but their foot will slip at length, from Deuteronomy 32:35. ' Their foot shall slide in due time for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.'

(5.) Lastly, Or they are the parallels of scripture-examples. Psalms 143:5. ' I remember the days of old.' The serious observer will find a surprising fulness here, as in the other parts of scripture. I will instance in three very astonishing pieces of providence, which often put good men to their wits end, to know how to account for them ; yet being brought to the glass of scripture-examples, such a harmony appears betwixt the one and the other, as cannot but be extremely satisfying.

(1.) Sometimes we see men walking contrary to God, and yet providence smiling on them, and caressing them, as if they were the darlings of heaven. This has puzzled the best of men. It put Jeremiah sore to it, Jeremiah 12:1-2, ' Righteous art thou, 0 Lord, when I plead with thee : yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments : wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root : they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit ; thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.' It was near carrying Asaph quite off his feet, Psalms 73:13. ' Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. But, 0 ! is there not a beautiful harmony in this with scripture-examples ? How did all Israel as one man back Absalom in his rebellion ? How did Haman rise till he could come no higher, unless he had got the throne ? And the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar carries all before him according to his wish, &c. And scripture-doctrine unriddles the mystery, Psalms 92:5-7. ' 0 Lord, how great are thy works ! and thy thoughts are very deep. A

brutish man knoweth not : neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish : it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.'

(2.) How often do astonishing strokes light on those who are dear to God, as if God selected them from among the rest of the world, to shew his hatred of them ? Ecclesiastes 8:14, ' There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked : again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.' 0 Sirs, this has been very puzzling to those that have met with it. But behold the harmony with scripture-examples ; as in Job's case. Eli loses his two sons at one blow, his daughter-in-law dies, and himself breaks his neck. Aaron the saint of God has two sons slain by fire from heaven. The apostles were set forth as appointed for death, &c. 1 Corinthians 4:9. Babylon is at ease when Zion lies in ruins. See Lamentations 2:20. But further,

(3.) How often has it been the lot of some of God's people to meet with heavy strokes from the hands of the Lord, when they have been going in the way which God himself bade them take? That will try people to purpose that observe these things. But blessed be God for the Bible, that lets us see this is no untrodden path. Jacob has an express command to return to Canaan, Genesis 22:13. But 0 what a train of heavy trials attend him ! Laban pursues him as a thief, Esau meets him with four hundred to slay him, the angel puts the knuckle of his thigh out of joint, his daughter is ravished by the Shechemites, his sons murder the Shechemites, Deborah dies, and his beloved wife Rachel dies, and Reuben defiles Bilhah. It was no wonder he said, ' Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.' Genesis 47:9.

2dly, There is a harmony of providences among themselves. It is observed of the wheels, that the four had ' one likeness,' Ezekiel 1:16. The dispensations of providence of the same kind, at the greatest distance of time from one another, have a beautiful likeness to one another. And therefore Solomon observes, Ecclesiastes 1:10. ' Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new ? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.' Did ever any meet with such a temptation and trial as I have met with ? say some. But says the apostle, 1 Corinthians 10:13. ' There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.' Was ever any afflicted at the rate that I am ?' says another. But, hear what the apostle says. 1 Peter 4:12. ' Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' See how Solomon accounts for this, Ecclesiastes 1:9-11. ' The Thing that bath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done, is that which shall be done ; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new ? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things ; neither shall their be any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.'

(1.) They are all wrought after the same pattern, namely, the word, in the various parts thereof. The same word which was accomplished on a nation or person thousands of years ago, is accomplished on others at this very day. The same word fulfilled in one's case some time ago, may be fulfilled over again when their case comes to be the same it was then.

(2.) They have all the same specific end, to reward or punish, check, direct, &c. And where the ends are alike, it is no wonder the measures be so too. God designed to make his enemies fall, and to deliver his church at the brink of ruin, in Esther's days ; and so in ours of late. Hence the plot was suffered to succeed; and when all seemed to be done, providence struck a sudden

stroke, and turned the wheel on the wicked. But is there any thing new here ? was it not just so in Esther's days ?

It is good to observe this harmony ; for by these means one sees himself in a paved road, and so may the better know how to steer his course. When one finds himself in a road where providence has led him before, he may consult his way-marks that he set up when he was there formerly, and so may travel it the more easily. And the same may he do when be is in the road, where he observes others have -been before him. He may beware of the steps where they stumbled, and keep the road by which he sees they got through.

3dly, There is a harmony of providences with their design and end, Deuteronomy 32:4. ' All his ways are judgment.' There is an admirable fitness in God's measures to reach his holy ends. The wheels were full of eyes as guided by infinite wisdom ; and whithersoever the living creatures had a face looking, the wheels had a side to go on. Whatsoever God created was very good, Genesis 1:1-31. ult. that is, very fit for the end of its creation. And so are all God's works of providence exactly answering their end. It is often observed of the wheels, They turned not when they went, as a chariot must needs do, when the charioteer has driven the horses the wrong way. If they were to go to another quarter, they were but to go on that side that looked that way all along. There is a twofold harmony to be observed here.

(1.) The harmony of every piece of providence with its particular end and design. Where there lie a great many pieces of wrightwork framed and shapen by the tradesman, should a bungler take them in hand, he cannot join then ; he complains that one mortise is too strait, and another too wide : but the artificer can sort them, and put each in its own place, and they answer exactly. So it is with providence. Every piece answers to its end, Ecclesiastes 3:11. ' He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.' There is a glaring instance of this in the strokes that providence reaches sinners to punish then for particular sins, where there is such an affinity betwixt the sin and the stroke, that the sin may be read in the punishment. This is done many ways, which yet perhaps may be all reduced to one of these four. The stroke answers the sin, either,

(1.) In time, the stroke following hard at the heels of the provocation, as 1 Kings 13:4. When Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, saying, lay hold on the man of God, immediately his hand dried up. So God punished Dinah's gadding abroad unnecessarily, David's security by his adultery, and Peter's going into the high priest's hall. Or,

(2.) In kind, whereby God justly pays home a person in the same coin as he sinned. Adonibezek is a notable instance of this, Judges 1:7. ' Threescore and ten kings (says he) having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table ; as I have done, so God hath requited me.' David's injury to Uriah's bed is punished by Absalom's doing the same to his. So many disobedient to their parents are paid home by their children again. Some wrong and oppress others, and afterwards others deal just so by them. Or,

(3.) In likeness, the stroke bearing a resemblance to the sin. The Sodomites burn in lust, and they are burnt with fire from heaven. Nadab and Abihu sinned by offering strange fire, and they are consumed with fire from the Lord. Jacob beguiles his father, pretending he was Esau, and Laban beguiles him with Leah instead of Rachel. As sinners measure to God in spirituals, he measures to them in temporals, 1 Corinthians 11:30.

(4.) In flat contrariety. Adam will be as God, and he becomes like the beast that perisheth. David's pride of the numbers of his people is punished by the loss of seventy thousand of them. Rachel must have children, or she cannot live ; she gets them, and dies in bringing one forth. The Jews crucify the Lord of glory, lest the Romans should cone and take away their place and their nation ; and that is the very thing that brings them.

(2.) The harmony of the several pieces among themselves with respect to their common end and design. And here there is often a beautiful mixture of contraries to make together one beautiful piece, Romans 8:28. ' All things shall work together.' Strike the strings of a viol one by one, they make but a sorry sound ; but strike them together by art, they make a pleasant harmony. The niecest piece of work lying in pieces, is but a confused heap. Joseph is sold for a slave ; and he is brought into Pharaoh's presence. How contrary do these seem? but the former was as necessary as the latter to accomplish the design of providence. Haman is advanced, and the good deed done by Mordecai is forgotten, till the fittest time of remembering it. Both harmonize to Haman's ruin. Providence loses no ground in all the compasses we imagine it takes : every circumstance is necessary to the carrying on of the common end.

4thly, There is a harmony of providences with the prayers of the people of God, that have the Spirit of prayer, Genesis 32:1-32. compared with Genesis 33:10. Many dispensations of providence are the returns of prayer. This seems to be the ground of that conclusion, Psalms 41:11. ' By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me ;' and puts an additional sweetness in mercies. There is one general rule as to the hearing of prayer, John 16:23. Whatsoever prayers are believingly put up in Christ's name are heard. And so we should notice the harmony of providence with prayer. Concerning which I offer these five observations.

(1.) That where God has no mind to give such a mercy, the spirit of prayer for that mercy will be restrained, Jeremiah 7:16. ' Pray not thou for this people,' &c. As, upon the other hand, when God minds his people a favour, he will open their lips to pray for it, Ezekiel 36:37. ' Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' And this is no wonder, if we consider, that the Spirit of the Lord dictated the word whereof providence is the accomplishment, and the same Spirit guides the wheel of providence, Ezekiel 1:20. and the same Spirit is the author of acceptable prayer, by which the sap of the word is sucked out in providence, Romans 8:26-27.

(2.) God hears believing prayers, either by granting the mercy itself which is sought, as Genesis 24:45. in Rebekah's appearing at the well, and drawing water as Abraham's servant had prayed for ; or else the equivalent, something that is as good, 2 Corinthians 12:8-9. in Paul's obtaining grace sufficient for him. Either of these ways providence brings the answer of prayer. For God's bond of promise that faith lays hold on, and pleads in prayer, may be paid either (as it were) in money or money-worth. And the harmony betwixt prayer and providence is to be acknowledged either of the ways.

(3.) Providence may for a time seem to go quite contrary to the saints` prayers, and yet afterwards come to meet exactly. It is an astonishing piece of providence that the saints sometimes meet with, namely, that a ease never is more hopeless than just after they have had a particular concern upon their spirits before the Lord about it ; so that they are made to say, as Psalms 65:5. ' By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, 0 God of our salvation.' But it is very usual in

the Lord’s dealings with his people to pass a sentence of death on their mercies ere they get them, as He did with the Israelites in Egypt, who were worse treated by Pharaoh after the application made to him to let them go, than before, Exodus 5:1-23. ult. Providence acts like a man that is to fetch a stroke, swinging the axe back, that he may come forward with the greater vigour.

(4.) Providence often very discernibly keeps pace with the prayers of his people, that as they go up or down, so it goes. An eminent instance whereof we have Exodus 17:11. in that while Noses held up his hand, Israel prevailed ; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Hence sometimes a matter will go fairly on, while the soul is helped to believe and wrestle ; but when unbelief makes the soul fag, the wheel begins to stand too. And it is no wonder this takes place, where the same, Spirit is in the creature, and in the wheel.

(5.) Lastly, Providence may sweetly harmonize with the spirit of prayer, and the believer’s expression in prayer, and yet not with the desires of their own spirit, which perhaps they went to lay before the Lord, Romans 8:26-27. The not distinguishing of these two makes many see a great jarring betwixt providence and their prayers, while in very deed there is a notable harmony betwixt them. And if they would carefully mark the words in which, under the influence of the Spirit, they presented their petitions to the Lord, they might find them wonderfully agree with the dispensation of providence, though not with the desire of their own spirits.

IV. I proceed, in the next place, to assign reasons why Christians should wisely observe providences.

1. Because they are God’s works, Psalms 135:6. The world, in the framing of it, was not a work of chance ; neither is it so in the management of it. Whoever be the instruments and second causes by which any thing falls out in our lot, God has the guiding of the wheels, and has a negative on the whole creation, Lamentations 3:37.

’ Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not ?’ Meet me with a favourable event? we are debtors to God for it, As Abraham’s servant acknowledged, on the favourable answer he received relating to Rebekah, in his bowing his head, and worshipping the Lord, Genesis 24:26. Do we meet with a cross one? It is the finger of God, though we see a creature’s whole hand in it, Amos 3:6. ’ Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?’ Now, seeing they are his works, they ought to be observed.

2. Because they are great works, Psalms 109:2. ’ The work of the Lord is great.’ Every work of providence bears the signature of a divine hand upon it. But the stamp is sometimes so fine, and our eyes so dull, that we are slow to perceive it. I told you that there are small lines of providence as well as great: but the great God does nothing but what is great and suitable to himself. Though some of his works are comparatively small, they are all great absolutely. And therefore with respect to those I called small ones, I must say to you, as Deuteronomy 1:17. ’ Y e shall hear the small as well a, the great.’ And good reason is there for it. For,

(1.) The smaller a piece of work is, the greater and more curious is the workmanship. Galen confessed the hand, and extolled the wisdom of God in the thigh of a gnat. An ordinary artificer will fit out a mill ; but the small wath requires a curious hand, and pictures of the least size shew most of the painter’s skill. That frogs should have been a plague to Pharaoh, or Herod eaten up of worms, was more admirable, than if the one had been plagued with an armed host, and the other

devoured by a lion. The rats devouring hats and poppies. (Turn. Hist. Prov. chap. 112.) was truly more admirable than the conquests of Alexander and Casar both.

(2.) Great things may be lying hid in the bosom of very minute and ordinary things. Search into the rise of that wonderful turn of providence with the church in Esther's days, and ye shall find it to be the king's falling off his rest one night, Esther 6:1. of that wonderful overthrow of the Moabites, and ye will find it a mere fancy, 2 Kings 3:22-23. The curse of God may be in the miscarrying of a basket of bread, Deuteronomy 28:17. And it may be big with a great mercy. They say the whale is mightily beholden to the little fish called museulus, which swims as a guide before her, without which she would be in danger in straits and betwixt great rocks. The little cloud like a man's hand often darkens the heavens ere all be done.

3. Because they are often very mysterious works, and therefore they need observation, Psalms 92:5. It is necessary to give us right views of providence, and to keep us from mistakes. The making judgment of providences is a very tender point, wherein the best of men have gone far wrong. Was not Jacob far out when he said, Genesis 42:36. ' All these things are against me,' if we compare the promise, Romans 8:28. All things shall work together for good,' &c. and the event too ? Many a time the outside of providence is very unlike it inside. The greatest cross may be wrapt up in what we take to be our greatest comfort ; and the greatest comfort may be inwrapt in what we call our greatest cross. Observation must break the shell, that we may look in.

4. Because they are always perfect works. They will abide the strictest search and the most narrow inquiry, Deuteronomy 32:4. What ever faults we find with them, as we do many, it is for want of due observation. But at length he shall gain that testimony and recantation, `lie hath done all things well,' Mark 7:37. In these his works no flaw is to be found, no mistake ; nothing too much, nothing too little ; nothing too soon done, nothing too late done ; nothing misplaced, nothing in or over; nay, nothing done that is not best done ; nothing that man or angel could make better. The world will startle at this as a paradox : but faith will believe it, on the solid ground of infinite wisdom, though sense contradict it, Isaiah 38:8. Jeremiah 12:1. 0 that they who will debate this truth would come near and observe.

5. Lastly, Because they are speaking works, Micah 6:9. They speak Heaven's language to the earth, and therefore should be observed. And they speak,

(1.) Of him, Psalms 19:2. They preach to us that he is, what a God he is, how holy, just, wise, good, and powerful, &c. We may see there his perfections as in a glass. Each pile of grass speaks a God, a wise, good, and powerful one. So many creatures as there are, so many mouths to speak of him. And it is man's work to observe and hear. When God had replenished the heavens with sun, moon, and stars, and the earth with variety of creatures, the creation was still imperfect till man was made. For what avails the musical instrument, if there be nobody to play on it ?

(2.) For him. Cross providences speak for him, Micah 6:9. And favourable providences also, Romans 2:4. Hereby sinners are instructed in the way they should go, Psalms 32:8. reproved, as Joseph's brethren ; and comforted, as Paul was, Php 2:27 And, in a word, they call us from sin unto God; by them, where the word goes before, Christ knocks at the door of sinners' hearts, and calls for access.

I come now to the improvement of this doctrine. And,

I. It may serve for lamentation. Ah ! may we not say, Who is wise to observe these things? Wise observers of providence are thin sown in the world ; because there are few exercised to godliness. God has given us enough to observe in the public and in our private case. He is speaking by his providence to the land, he is speaking loudly at this day to the parish, to you and to me, and to every one in particular. But, alas' it is not observed to purpose. Graceless people are presumptuous, and will not observe ; and even many godly are heedless, and do not observe. There are these six evidences that this wise observation of providence is very rare.

1. How many are there who see God no more in their mercies and crosses, than if they were a parcel of atheists, that did not think there were a God, or that believed no providence at all ? If they get a mercy, God is not owned in it ; they sacrifice to their own net. If they get a cross, they cry out by reason of the arm of the Almighty. But none saith, Where is God my Maker' In all the turns of their life and lot, they never seriously look to the wheel within the wheel.

2. How many are there to whom God in his providence is speaking plain language, that he who runs may read it, yet they will not understand it? Psalms 82:5. God plagues the Philistines for the ark most visibly, yet they are at a loss, saying, It may be it is a chance. Balaam's ass refuses to carry him forward on the way, but he is in a rage against her. God meets sinners in their way, with speaking providences ; but on they go; they do not hear, they will not be stopped. Like the dog, they snarl at the stone, but look not to the hand that threw it.

3. How few are exercised to know the design of providences that they meet with? Many signal mercies they meet with, but put not the question, What is God saying to me by these things', ' Many a heavy dispensation they meet with, partly by the rod's hanging over their- heads, partly by its lying on them ; yet they never seriously take up Job's exercise, Job 10:2. ' I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.' These things let them cone and go with as little concern to know the design of them, as if they had none.

4. How few are exercised to comply with the design of providences, to accommodate themselves to the divine dispensations ? Job 33:13-14. If men were wise observers of providence, it would be their constant practice to be answering the several calls thereof, still facing about towards it, as the shadow on the dial to the body of the sun, Psalms 27:8. ' When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' But, alas' men meet with humbling providences, but they are not exercised to mortify their pride : they meet with awakening providences, yet they are not exercised to rouse up themselves to their duty : they meet with afflicting providences in worldly things, yet they are not exercised to get their hearts weaned from the world ; they meet with reproving providences, yet they are not exercised to repent and mourn over the sins thereby pointed out. But they really strive with their Maker, and while he draws by his providence, they hold fast, and will not let it go, Jeremiah 6:29.

5. The little skill that people have in judging of providences. A man will readily have skill in his own trade : but it is no wonder to see people unacquainted with things in which their business does not lie. 0 what commentaries on providence are in the world, that destroy the text ! How miserably is the doctrine of particular dispensations perverted ! Despisers of God and his ordinances are very easy ; and therefore the world concludes, 'it is vain to serve God, and that there is no profit in keeping his ordinances,' Malachi 3:14. The proud are called 'happy,' Malachi 3:15. They are best that have least to do with them. Good men meet with signal strokes: the world concludes that they

are hypocrites, and they must be guilty of some heinous wickedness beyond other people, Job 5:1. Luke 13:1-2. And a thousand such blunders there are.

6. Lastly, They rank poverty in respect of Christian experience found among professors. What a learned Egyptian said to a Greek, Vos Graeci semper pueri, may be said to many in whom there is some good thing towards the God of Israel. Ye professors are ever children, 2 Corinthians 3:1. Hebrews 5:12. And what is the reason, but that we have never yet fallen close to the study of observing providences? See the text. There is a daily market in providence, but ye do no trade in it ; and therefore ye are always poor. There is perhaps a lesson put in your hands this day, that ye had several years since, but ye did not learn it; and so it is now as great a mystery to you as then.

USE II. Of exhortation. 0 be exhorted to become wise observers of providence. 0 fall at length upon this piece of practical religion. Many of us have it, I fear, yet to begin; and all have need to mend their pace in it. For enforcing this exhortation, I shall give you some other points of doctrine from the words, by way of motives and direction, and so shut up this subject. For motives take these doctrines.

1. Wise observing of providence is a rare thing in the world Who is wise, and will observe these things, as the words may bear. And the reason is, the truth of religion is rare, and close and tender walking with God is yet rarer, Matthew 22:14. and Matthew 25:5. The most part of the world go the broad way to destruction, Matthew 7:14. and therefore they are not concerned to observe the works of the Lord. Many Christians there are, that, alas ! in these dregs of time are not exercised Christians. Up then and be doing, and conspire not with the multitude to put a slight on God’s speaking by his providence, lest his fury break forth as fire on you with the rest, John 6:66. The more rare the observing of providence is, it is the more precious. Stones may be gathered from the surface of the earth, while gold must be dug with much labour out of the bowels of it, The finest things are hardest to be won at : Nulla virtus sine lapide. As Christ himself had a stone rolled on him, so every grace, work, and way of Christ has one. But there is a pearl underneath ; and the heavier the stone, the more precious is the pearl. Come and see in this particular.

II. They that are wise will be observers of providences, Whoso is wise, and will observe these things. And at what pitch your wisdom arrives, your observation of providences will follow it, Ecclesiastes 2:14. The eating of the forbidden fruit cast all mankind into a spiritual madness ; and the truth is, the most part of the world are in that respect as madmen, regarding neither the word nor works of the Lord. But if thou wert come to thyself, it would not be so, Luke 15:17. How long hast thou acted as a fool, in matters of greatest weight, being penny-wise and pound-foolish, careful for a mite, and in the meantime letting talents slip through thy fingers ? Luke 10:41-42.

0 Sirs, how do unobserved providences aggravate our guilt, and increase our accounts ! When the day shall come, the Lord will reckon with the sinner, for all the pains he has bestowed on him to bring him to himself : when his slighting the call of the word shall be aggravated with so many items of providences. How will the sinner look, when the Lord shall say, Did I not give thee such and such mercies to draw thee from thy sin? lay such and such crosses in thy way to drive thee from it? What hast thou done with all the instructive up-stirring providences I gave thee ? with all the providential warnings, rebukes, &e. given thee ? Remember that passage, Proverbs 9:12. ’ If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself : but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.’

III. The wise observation of providences is a soul-enriching trade. They shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. This is so on two accounts, both deducible from the text.

1. That which seems the most barren piece of providence, becomes fruitful by wise observation. Some of these things in the text are very cross providences; yet even by them one shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Behold a holy art, whereby ye may not only gather honey out of every sweet-smelling flower, but may gather grapes of spiritual profit off the thorns of afflictions, and figs of thistles. The apostle tells us a mystery, of a pleasure in infirmities, distresses, &c. 2 Corinthians 12:10. Wise observation would let you into the secret.

2. It has the promise, in the text. God has said, such a one shall know more and feel more in religion than others. ' To him that hath (i. e, improves what he has) shall be given.' And the more a man sets himself to observe, the more he will get to observe, and the more happy will his observations be. By the wise observation of providences,

(1.) Sin and duty in particular cases is discovered. No dispensations of providence whatsoever can warrant us to go over the belly of God's commands, 1 Samuel 13:11, &c. But where two lawful things are before us, providence may point out what is present duty, and which of them we are to choose. And so the word teacheth, Psalms 32:8. ' I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye.'

(2.) One gets a clear view of the divine authority of the scriptures, very necessary in such an age wherein atheism, profaneness, and immorality so much abound. For the wise observer sees the fulfilling of it exactly, and so is confirmed. While he observes providences, he sees scripture-doctrines, promises, threatenings, and prophecies accomplished, and the parallels of scripture-examples ; and so reads the truth of God's word in his works, Psalms 58:11.

(3.) hereby a Christian is established in the good ways of the Lord, and that by those very things that make others to stagger, yea, themselves also, when they do not observe, Psalms 73:22, &c. It is the woful estrangedness to this exercise that makes so many here-away there-away professors, tossed about with every wind that rises, while amidst all these reelings the wise observer sits firm like the expert mariner among the boisterous waves, Psalms 143:5.

(4.) Hereby a Christian gets store of experiences, to lay by him for use at another time. How did Joseph sustain Egypt in time of the dearth, but by the corn laid up in time of plenty ? So the Psalmist says, ' 0 my God, my soul is cast down within me : therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar,' Psalms 42:6. But for want of this some people are always from hand to mouth, always to begin ; ever learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth, Mark 6:52.

(5.) Lastly, It is a nurse to all the graces of the Spirit. It is a notable help to faith, Exodus 14:1-31. ult. A short-limbed faith will reach far up, when it stands upon experiences.-To love ; see the text. Now, the love of God perceived kindles the flame of love in us.-To patience and waiting on the Lord ; for observation will keep them from being hasty while the work is on the wheel, Psalms 37:2.--To hope ; ' for experience worketh hope,' Romans 5:4; for former mercies are pledges of future ones.--To contempt of the world.--To holy fear, Exodus 14:1-31. ult.--To delight and joy in the Lord, Psalms 92:4.--To self-loathing, and thankfulness, Psalms 144:1-3, &c. And now for direction take this doctrine, There is need of true wisdom to fit a man for right observation of

providence. And that wisdom is,

1. Spiritual wisdom, 1 Corinthians 2:15. Carnal wisdom is no good observer of providence, as the blind man is no fit judge of colours.

2. Scripture wisdom ; for the scripture is the pattern, and providence the work. They that study the language of Heaven in providence, must consult the scriptures as the dictionary for that language.

3. Practical wisdom, Psalms 111:2. Even scripture-notions floating in the head will do but little service, but sinking into the heart, reduced into practice, will be of good use here. And the more to fit you for this work, take these following lessons from the word concerning providences.

(1.) The design of Providence may sometimes lie very hid ; and therefore it is good to wait, and not to be rash, Psalms 77:19.

(2.) Sometimes providence seems to forget the promise ; but it is not so, but only the time of the promise is not then come, Genesis 15:4. with Genesis 16:2.

(3.) Sometimes providence seems to go quite cross to the promise, and his work to go contrary to his word. But wait ye, they will assuredly meet, Genesis 22:1-24.

(4.) Ofttimes providence favours a design, which yet will be blasted in the end, for that it was not the purpose of God, Jonah 1:3.

(5.) Ofttimes providence will run counter in appearance to the real design, and by a tract of dispensations will seem to cross it more and more, till the grave-stone appear to be laid on it. And yet, ' at evening-time it shall be light,' Zechariah 14:7.

(6.) Providence many times lays aside the most likely means and brings about his work by that which nothing is expected of, 2 Kings 5:11-12.

(7.) Lastly, Sometimes providence works by contraries, as the blind man was cured with laying clay on his eyes.

Learn to live by faith, and be frequent in meditation and self-examination, and be much in prayer.

Thus I have laid before you the duty of observing providences. May the Lord pity them that make no conscience of practising what they hear, and get nothing of all but a testimony against themselves. And may He give us all understanding in all things.

Chapter 131

S. To Search and Study the Scriptures is the Duty of All Classes of Men

To Search and Study the Scriptures is the Duty of All Classes of Men by Thomas Boston

If ye ask, by whom this is to be done? It is by all into whose hands, by the mercy of God, it comes. Some never had it, and so they will not be condemned for slighting of it, Romans 2:12. Magistrates are called to look to it, and be much conversant in it, Joshua 1:8. 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.' Deuteronomy 17:18-19. 'And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them.'

Ministers are in a special manner called to the study of it. 1 Timothy 4:13. 'Give attendance to reading.' 2 Timothy 3:16-17. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction iii righteousness.' But not they only are so commanded, but all others within the church, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' Deuteronomy 6:6-7 'These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.'

Chapter 132

S. Treatise on the 4th Commandment

TREATISE ON THE 4th COMMANDMENT by Thomas Boston

1676-1732 ON DOCTRINE COMMENT

The author’s conclusion is as follows:

1, The Sabbath is moral and perpetual in the requirement that it be observed.

2. The Jewish Sabbath was on the seventh day of the week, but the day has been changed and is now observed on the first day of the week, as the Lord’s Day or the Christian Sabbath.

Both claims are based on assumptions that are not stated in the Scripture. The Scripture makes no mention of a perpetual obligation to observe the Sabbath or change in the Sabbath, never speaks about a Christian Sabbath day and never states that Christians are to observe a specific day of worship, whether it be a Sabbath or otherwise.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Exodus 20:8

Introduction

This command relates to the time of worship, and is the last of the first table of the Ten Commandments, set to join both tables of the commandments together, the Sabbath being the bond of all religion. In the words we have the command and the reasons annexed to the command. The command

It is delivered in two ways, positively and negatively. The command is delivered positively: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Sabbath signifies rest or cessation from labour. There is a threefold rest or Sabbath spoken of in Scripture:

(a) Temporal - the weekly Sabbath.

(b) Spiritual - which is an internal soul rest, in ceasing from sin (Hebrews 4:3).

(c) Eternal (Hebrews 4:9-11), celebrated in heaven, where the saints rest from their labours.

It is the first of these, the weekly Sabbath, that is here meant. Observe here:

(1) Our duty with respect to the Sabbath. It is "to keep it holy" - God has made it holy, set it apart for holy exercises, and we must keep it holy, spending it in holy exercises.

(2) The quantity of time to be observed as a Sabbath of rest, a day, a whole day of twenty-four hours; and the one day in seven. They must observe a seventh day after six days’ labour, wherein all our work must be done and finished so as nothing of it may remain to be done on the Sabbath.

(3) A note of remembrance put upon it; which indicates that this precept should be diligently observed, special regard paid to it, and due honour put upon this sacred day. The command is delivered negatively. Here observe two things:

(a) What is forbidden here - the doing of any work that may hinder the sanctifying of this day.

(b) To whom the command is directed, and who must observe it - magistrates, to whom belong the gates of the city, and masters of families, to whom belong the gates of the house. They must observe it themselves and cause others to observe it. The reasons annexed to this command

None of the commands is thus delivered, both positively and negatively, as this one is. And that indicates the following three matters:

God is in a special manner concerned for the keeping of the Sabbath, it being that on which all religion depends. Accordingly, as it is observed or disregarded, so it readily goes with the other parts of religion.

People are most ready to halve the service of this day, either to look on resting from labour as sufficient, or to look on the work of the day as over when the public work is over.

There is less light of nature for this command than the rest: for though it is naturally moral that there should be a Sabbath; yet it is but positively moral that this should be one day in seven, depending entirely on the will of God.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall show:

What is required in the Fourth Commandment. Which day of the seven God has appointed to be the weekly Sabbath.

How the Sabbath is to be sanctified.

What is forbidden in this command. The reasons annexed to it.

Make an application of the subject.

Chapter I : What is required in the Fourth Commandment?

I am to show what is required in the Fourth Commandment. This command, according to our Catechism, requires "the keeping holy to God such set times as He hath appointed in His Word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to Himself".

Here I shall show:

1. This command requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His Word.

2. It requires one day in seven to be kept as a holy Sabbath to the Lord.

3. The day to be kept holy is one whole day.

1. God has appointed times which are to be kept holy

First, I am to show, that this command requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His Word.

The Jews under the Old Testament had several days beside the weekly Sabbath, that by divine appointment were to be kept as holy days, and by virtue of this command they were to observe them, even as by virtue of the second commandment they were to observe the sacrifices and other parts of the Old Testament instituted worship. But these days are taken away under the gospel by the coming of Christ.

But that which this commandment in the first place requires, is the keeping holy of a Sabbath to God; whatever be the day God determines for it; whether the seventh in order from the creation, as under the Old Testament, or the first, as under the New. And so the command is, "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy' - not, "Remember the seventh day" - Thus the keeping of a Sabbath is moral duty binding all persons in all places of the world.

For it is moral duty and it is required by the natural law, that as God is to be worshipped, not only internally, but externally, not only privately, but publicly; so there must be some special time designed and set apart for this, without which it cannot be done. And so the very Pagans had their sabbaths and holy days. This is the first thing signified here, namely that a Sabbath is to be kept.

[Second] Another thing signified here is, that it belongs to God to determine the Sabbath, or what day or days He will have to be kept holy. He does not say, "Remember to keep holy a Sabbath Day, or a day of rest", leaving it to men what days shall be holy, and what not; but, "Remember the Sabbath Day", supposing the day to be already determined by Himself. So that we are bound to the set time appointed in His Word.

And this condemns men taking on themselves, whether as churches or states, to appoint holy days to be kept, which God has not appointed in His Word.

Consider the four following matters:

(a) This command puts a peculiar honour on the Sabbath above all other days, "Remember the Sabbath Day". But when men make holy days of their own to be kept holy, the day appointed of God is spoiled of its peculiar honour, and there is no peculiar honour left to it (Ezekiel 43:8). Yea, in practice they go before it; for men's holy days, where they are regarded, are more regarded than God's day.

(b) This command says, "Six days shalt thou labour" - Formalists say, There are many of these six days thou shalt not labour, for they are holy days. If these words contain a command, who can countermand it? if but a permission, who can take away that liberty which God has left us? As for fast-days or thanksgiving-days appointed on particular occasions, they are not holy days; the worship is not made to wait on the days, as on Sabbaths and holidays, but the days are made to wait on the worship which God by His providence requires; and consequently there must be a time for performing these exercises.

(c) It belongs only to God to make a holy day; for who can sanctify a creature but the Creator, or who can sanctify time but the Lord of time? He only can give the blessing: why should they then sanctify a day who cannot bless it? The Lord abhors holy days devised out of men's own hearts (1 Kings 12:33).

(d) What reason is there to think that when God has taken away from the church's neck a great many holy days appointed by Himself, He has left the gospel church to be burdened with as many, nay, and more of men's invention, than He Himself had appointed?

2. One day in seven must be kept as a holy Sabbath

This command requires one day in seven to be kept as a holy Sabbath unto the Lord: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. "Thus the Lord determines the quantity of time that is to be His own, in a peculiar manner, that is, the seventh part of our time. After six days' working, a seventh is to be a Sabbath. This is moral, binding all persons in all ages, and not a ceremony abrogated by Christ.

(a) This command of appointing one day in seven for a Sabbath is one of the commands of that law, consisting of ten commands, which cannot be made out without this; it was written on tables of stone, to show the perpetuity of it; and of which Christ says (Matthew 5:17-19); "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:

but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

(b) It was appointed and given by God to Adam in innocency, before there was any ceremony to be taken away by the coming of Christ (Genesis 2:3).

(c) All the reasons annexed to this command are moral, respecting all men, as well as the Jews to whom the ceremonial law was given. And we find strangers obliged to the observation of it, as well as the Jews; but they were not obliged to the observation of ceremonial laws.

(d) Jesus Christ speaks of it as a thing perpetually to endure, even after the Jewish Sabbath was over and gone (Matthew 24:20). And so, although the Sabbath of the seventh day in order from the creation was changed into the first day, yet still it was kept a seventh day.

3. One whole day must be kept holy

The day to be kept holy is one whole day. Not a few hours, while the public worship lasts, but a whole day. There is an artificial day between sunrise and sunset (John 11:9) and a natural day of twenty-four hours (Genesis 1:1-31) which is the day here meant. This day we begin in the morning immediately after mid-night: and so does the Sabbath begin, and not in the evening; as is clear, if you consider the following three matters:

(a) John 20:19 - `The same day at evening, being the first day of the week' - where you see that the evening following, not going before this first day of the week, is called the evening of the first day.

(b) Our Sabbath begins where the Jewish Sabbath ended; but the Jewish Sabbath did not end towards the evening, but towards the morning (Matthew 28:1): "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,' etc.

(c) Our Sabbath is held in memory of Christ's resurrection, and it is certain that Christ rose early in the morning of the first day of the week.

Let us therefore take the utmost care to give God the whole day, spending it in the manner He has appointed, and not look on all the time, apart from what is spent in public worship, as our own; which is too much the case in these degenerate times wherein we live.

Chapter II : Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

I come now to show which day of the seven God has appointed to be the weekly Sabbath. According to our Catechism, "From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath".

We have heard that this command requires a Sabbath to be kept - that is one whole day in seven. We are now to consider what day that is. The Scripture teaches us, that there are two days which have by divine appointment had this honour, the seventh day, and the first day of the week.

Sabbath - the seventh day of the week

As to the seventh day, it is acknowledged by all, that that was the Jewish Sabbath. And concerning it, consider the following four matters. Who appointed the seventh day to be the Sabbath? It was God Himself that appointed the seventh, which is the last day of the week, by us called Saturday, to be the Sabbath: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God" - He that was the Lord of time made this designation of the time at first.

Wherefore did God at first appoint the seventh? The reason of this was, that as God rested that day from all His works of creation, men might, after His example, rest on that day from their own works, that they might remember His, and celebrate the praises of the Creator. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth - and rested the seventh day." The work of creation was per-formed in the six days, and nothing was made on the seventh day; so that the first new day that man saw was a holy day, a Sabbath, that he might know the great end of his creation was to serve the Lord.

How long did that appointment of the seventh day last? To the resurrection of Christ. This was its last period, at which time it was to give place to a new institution, as will afterwards appear. The day of Christ's resurrection was the day of the finishing of the new creation, the restoration of a marred world.

When was the Sabbath of the seventh day appointed first? Some who detract from the honour of the Sabbath, contend that it was not appointed till the promulgating of the law on mount Sinai, and that its first institution was in the wilderness. We hold that it was appointed from the beginning of the world. For proof of this, consider the following:

(a) Moses tells us plainly, that God, immediately after perfecting of the works of creation, blessed and hallowed the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). Now, how could it be blessed and hallowed but by an appointing of it to be the Sabbath, setting it apart from common works, to the work of God's solemn worship? The words run on in a continued history without the least shadow of anticipating, upwards of two thousand years, as some would have it.

(b) The Sabbath of the seventh day was observed before the promulgation of the law from Sinai, and is spoken of (Exodus 16:1-36) not as a new institution but as an ancient institution. So (Exodus 16:5) preparation for the Sabbath is called for, before any mention of it is made, clearly signifying that it was known before. See Exodus 16:23 where the Sabbath is given for a reason why they should prepare the double quantity of manna on the sixth day; which says that solemn day was not first instituted then. And the breach of the Sabbath is (Exodus 16:28) exposed as the violating of a law formerly given.

(e) In the Fourth Commandment, they are called to remember the Sabbath Day, as a day that was not then first appointed but had been appointed before, although it had gone out of use, and had been much forgotten when they were in Egypt. Besides, the reasons of this command, God's resting the seventh day, and blessing and hallowing it, being from the beginning of the world, say that the law was in force when the reason of the law took place.

(d) This is evident from Hebrews 4:3-9. The apostle there proves, that there remains a Sabbath, or rest to the people of God, into which they are to enter by faith, from this, that the Scripture speaks only of three sabbatisms or rests; one after the works of creation, another after the coming into Canaan; and David's words cannot be understood of the first, for that was over (Hebrews 4:3) and so was the other; therefore there remaineth a rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

Some allege against this, that the patriarchs did not observe the Sabbath, because there is no mention made of it in the Scriptures. But this is no just prejudice; for at that rate we might as well conclude it was not observed all the time of the judges, Samuel and Saul; for nowhere is it recorded in that history that they did. Yea, though the patriarchs had not observed it, yet that could no more militate against the first institution, than their polygamy could militate against the first institution of marriage. But as from the patriarchs sacrificing, we infer the divine appointment of sacrifice, so from the institution of the Sabbath, we may infer their keeping it. And their counting by weeks, as Noah did (Genesis 8:10,Genesis 8:12) and Laban with Jacob (Genesis 29:27-28) does not show it obscurely: for to what end did they use this computation, but that the Sabbath might be distinguished from other days? And the piety of the patriarchs persuades us, that they observed that solemn day for worship; and if any day, what but that designed by God?

Sabbath - the first day of the week

As to the Sabbath of the first day of the week:

Consider the date of it, which was from the resurrection of Christ, to continue to the end of the world; for the days of the gospel are the last days.

How the Sabbath could be changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. The Fourth Commandment holds but a Sabbath to be kept, and that one in seven. As for the designation of the day, He that designed one, could design another; and the substituting of a new day is the repealing of the old.

Wherefore this change was made. Upon the account of the resurrection of Christ, wherein the work of man's redemption was completed.

By what authority it was changed into the first day. The Sabbath was by divine authority changed from the seventh to the first day of the week; so that the Lord's Day is now by divine appointment

the Christian Sabbath.

(a) The Sabbath of the first day of the week is prophesied of under the Old Testament (Psalms 118:24): `This is the day which the Lord hath made," viz, the day of Christ's resurrection, when the stone which the builders rejected was made the head of the corner. "We will rejoice and be glad in it"; that is, we will celebrate it as a day of rejoicing and thankfulness for the work of redemption. Compare Acts 4:10-11: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." It is possible that the following passage may refer to this matter (Ezekiel 43:27): "And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord." And it may be called the eighth day, because the first day of the week now is the eighth in order from the creation. As also Isaiah 11:10: "His rest shall be glorious." As the Father's rest from the work of creation was glorious by the seventh day's rest, so the rest of the Son from the work of redemption was glorious by the first day's rest. On this day it was that the light was formed; so on this day did Christ the Sun of righteousness, the true light, arise from the dark mansions of the grave with resplendent glory.

(b) This day is called "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). That this Lord's Day is the first day of the week, is clear, if you consider, that John speaks of this day as a known day among Christians by that name. It could not be the Jewish Sabbath, for that is always called the Sabbath, and the Jewish Sabbaths were then repealed (Colossians 2:16). Neither could it mean any other day of the week, wherein Christ specially manifested Himself, for that would determine no day at all. And that this phrase infers a divine institution, is evident from the like phrase of the sacrament called the Lord's Supper.

(c) It is evident there ought to be a Sabbath, and that from the creation till Christ's resurrection the seventh day in order was appointed by God Himself. It is no less evident, that the Sabbath is changed to the first day of the week, and that lawfully, because the Jewish Sabbath is repealed. Now, who could lawfully make this change but one who had divine authority? who therefore is called Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

(d) It was the practice of the apostles and primitive Christians to observe the first day of the week for the Sabbath (John 20:19, Acts 20:7). On this day the collection for the poor was made (1 Corinthians 16:2) and you know the apostles had from Christ what they delivered to the churches as to ordinances (1 Corinthians 11:23).

The Lord, by glorious displays of His grace and Spirit, has remarkably honoured this day, in all ages of the church; and by signal strokes from heaven has vindicated the honour of this day on the profaners of it. Of this remarkable instances may be seen in history, both at home and abroad.

Let us therefore sanctify this day, as the day which God has appointed, and blessed as a day of sacred rest in the Christian church.

Chapter III : How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

I come now to show you how the Sabbath is to be sanctified. The Catechism tells us, "It is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy".

Here I shall show, what it is to sanctify the Sabbath, and what are the parts of the sanctification of it.

What is it to sanctify the Sabbath? The Sabbath Day is not capable of any sanctity or holiness, except what is relative - that is, in respect of its use for holy rest or exercise. So:

(a) God has sanctified that day, by setting it apart for holy uses, designing and appointing it in a special manner for His own worship and service.

(b) Men must sanctify it by keeping it holy, spending that day in God's worship and service, for which God has set it apart; using it only for the uses that God has consecrated it unto.

What are the parts of the sanctification of the Sabbath? They are two - holy rest, and holy exercise.

Sanctifying the Sabbath by a holy rest

The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy rest. Therefore it is called a sabbath, i.e. a rest.

A. What are we to rest from? On the Sabbath we must rest firstly from our worldly employments. God has given us six days for these; but His day must be kept free of them: "In it thou shalt not do any work. "The works of our worldly calling have six days, those of our heavenly calling but one. We must rest from the former, that we may apply ourselves to the latter. Now, such works are to be accounted:

(a) All manual labour or servile employments tending to our worldly gain, as on other days of the week, as ploughing and sowing, bearing of burdens, etc. (Nehemiah 13:15), driving of beasts to market, or exercising any part of ones calling.

(b) All study of liberal arts and sciences. The Sabbath is not a day for such exercises, as the reading of history, the studying of sciences, etc. (Isaiah 58:13).

(c) All civil works, such as making of bargains, unnecessary journeying, travelling to Monday markets on the Lord's Day, though people wait on sermons, or take them by the way. It is indeed the sin of those that do not change their market days when they so fall out, and a sin in the government to suffer it: but that will not justify those who comply with the temptation, seeing God has given us other days of the week. If they cannot overtake their market after the Sabbath, they should go away before, that they may rest on the Sabbath, wherever they are (Exodus 16:29).

Secondly, on the Sabbath we must rest from all worldly recreations, though lawful on other days. It is not a day for carnal pleasures of any form, any more than it is for worldly employments. Our delights should be heavenly this day, not to please the flesh but the spirit; and sports, plays and pastimes are a gross profanation of the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Now this rest of the Sabbath from these must be:

(a) A rest of the hands from them. The hands must rest, that the heart may be duly exercised.

(b) A rest of the tongue. People should not give their orders for the week's work on the Lords Day, nor converse about their worldly business.

(c) A rest of the head from thinking of it, and forming plans and contrivances about worldly affairs.

But here are excepted works of two sorts:

Firstly, works of necessity, as to quench a house on fire, etc.

Secondly, works of mercy, as to save the life of a beast (Matthew 12:1-50). Under which may be comprehended:

(a) Good works, such as visiting the sick, relieving the poor, etc.

(b) Works of decency, such as dressing the body with comely attire.

(c) Works of common honesty and humanity, as saluting one another (1 Peter 3:8).

(d) Works of necessary refreshment, as dressing and taking of meat.

(e) Works having a necessary connection with and tendency to the worship of God, as travelling on the Lord's Day to sermons (2 Kings 4:23).

But in all these things it should be observed that the necessity should be real, and not pretended: for it is not enough that the work cannot be done to such advantage on another day; for that might let out people on the Sabbath, if it be a windy day or so forth, to cut down their corn, which yet God has in a special manner provided against (Exodus 34:21); and that would have justified the sellers of fish, whom Nehemiah discharged (Nehemiah 13:16-19). And there-fore I cannot think that the making of cheese on the Lord's Day can be accounted a work of necessity, lawful on that day: for as much might be said in the other cases as can be said in this, viz, that the corn may shake, the fishes spoil, etc. Besides, people should take heed that they bring not that necessity on themselves, by timeously providing to prevent it. And when works of real necessity and mercy are to be done, they should be done, not with a work day's, but Sabbath Day's frame.

B. Who are to rest? The command is very particular:

(a) {Persons] (i) The heads of the family, the heads of the state, master and mistress, are to give example to others.

(ii) The children, son, daughter; they must not have their liberty to profane the Sabbath by playing any more than by working.

(iii) Servants, whose toil all the week may tempt them to mis-spend the Lord's Day; they must not be bidden to profane the Sabbath; and if they be, they must obey God rather than man.

(iv) The stranger must not be allowed his liberty: we must not compliment away the honour of the Sabbath.

(b) Beasts; they must rest; not that the law reaches them for themselves, but for their owners; either because they require attendance at work, or put the case they did not, yet it is the work

which must not be done. This lets us see, that where even their work maybe carried on, on the Lord's Day without attendance on them, yet it is not to be done.

C. What makes the rest holy? Respect to the command of God.

Sanctifying the Sabbath by holy exercises

The Sabbath is to be sanctified by holy exercise.

Public exercises of God's worship (Isaiah 66:23), such as hearing sermons (Luke 4:16), prayer (Acts 16:13-14), receiving of the sacraments, where there is occasion (Acts 20:7), and singing of psalms (Psalms 92:1 title).

Private exercises of worship, alone and in our families (Leviticus 23:3). Neither of these must jostle out the other. God has joined them; let us not put them asunder.

And these duties are to be done with a special elevation of heart on the Sabbath Day; they ought to be performed with a frame suiting the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13):

(a) Grace must be stirred up to exercise, otherwise the Sabbath will be a burden. Grace will be at its height in heaven, and the Sabbath is an emblem of heaven (Revelation 1:10).

(b) The heart should be withdrawn from all earthly things, and intent upon the duty of the day. We must leave the ass at the foot of the mount, that we may converse with God.

(c) Love and admiration are special ingredients here. The two great works of creation and redemption, which we are particularly called to remember on the Lord's Day, are calculated to excite our love and admiration.

(d) We should have a peculiar delight in the day, and the duties of it, exchanging our lawful pleasures on other days with spiritual pleasures on this. The holy rest must be combined with the holy exercises

The rest without holy exercise is not sufficient.

1. The Sabbath rest resembles that of heaven, which is a rest without a rest, wherein the soul is most busy and active, serving the Lord without weariness.

2. If it were enough, we were obliged to sanctify the Sabbath no more than beasts, who only rest that day.

3. The rest enjoined is not commanded for itself, but for the holy exercises of the day.

Now, it is the whole day that is thus to be spent; i.e. the natural day. Not that people are bound to be in these exercises without intermission all the twenty-four hours; for God has not made the Sabbath to be a burden to man, but that we should continue God's work as we do our own on other days, where we are allowed necessary rest and refreshment by sleep in the night.

Application

Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. This note is put upon it for the following two reasons:

Because of the great weight of the thing, the Sabbath being the bond of all religion. It is God's deal-day, wherein His people may expect furniture for all the week.

Because we are very apt to forget it (Ezekiel 22:26). There is less light of nature for this than other commands. It restrains our liberty in those things that we do all the week. And Satan, knowing the importance of it for our souls, that it is a day of blessing, sets onus to forget it. If you would then sanctify the Sabbath, remember the Sabbath Day in these three ways:

(a) Remember it before it come; on the last day of the week, on the Saturday's evening, laying by work timeously to prepare for it (Luke 23:54).

(b) Remember it when it is come; rise early on the Sabbath morning (Psalms 92:2). The morning has enough ado: worship God secretly and privately: prepare yourselves for ordinances, wrestle with God for His presence in them, that He may graciously assist the minister in preaching, and may graciously assist you in hearing, and may bless the Word to you. Remember it while it is going on, that it is God's day, a day of blessing, and ply diligently the work of the day, not only in time of the public work, but after, till the day be finished.

(c) Remember it when it is over, to see what good you have got by it; to bless Him for any smiles of His face, or manifestations of His grace; and to mourn over your failures, and apply to the blood of Christ for pardon and cleansing.

Chapter IV : What is forbidden in this command?

I proceed to show what is forbidden in the Fourth Commandment. We are told in the Catechism, that it "forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about worldly employments or recreations".

There are five ways in which this commandment is broken.

Omission of Sabbath duties

This commandment is broken by omission of the duties required on this day, whether in whole or in part. Many of the Sabbath duties are the duties of every day; but the omission of them, which is always criminal, is more so on this day, because on it we are specially called to them. We sin against this command, then, when we neglect the public or private exercises of God's worship.

Not remembering the Sabbath, before it comes, to prepare for it; entertaining a carnal, worldly frame of spirit on the night before, not laying aside work in good time and composing our hearts for the approaching Sabbath; far more when people continue at their work later that night than ordinary, getting as near the borders of the Sabbath as they can.

Neglecting the duties of the Sabbath morning; particularly:

(a) The duty of meditation. Those that are in the spirit on the Lord's Day, their spirits will be busy, elevated to heavenly things, and conversing with heaven. The two great works of creation and redemption require our thoughts particularly on that day (Psalms 92:5) and we must needs be guilty, when, while God has set these great marks before us, we do not aim to hit them. Has not God made it a day of blessing? Should not we then consider our wants, miseries, and needs, and

sharpen our appetites after that food that is set before us in ordinances on that day?

(b) Secret prayer. The Sabbath morning is a special time for wrestling with God, confessing, petitioning, and giving thanks. Then there should be wrestling for the blessing on the day of blessing. And the neglect of it is a very bad beginning for that good day. When will they come to God's door who will not come then? (Psalms 92:1-2).

(c) Family exercise. This command has a special respect to family religion. As God will have the family to mind and see to their own work on the six days, so He calls them to mind His together on the Sabbath. Every family is to be a church, especially on the Lord's Day. And if people came with their hearts warmed from family duties to the public, they would speed.

Neglect of the public exercises of God's worship (Hebrews 10:25). By this neglect the Sabbath is profaned. The public ordinances on the Lord's Day, whatever else they do, they keep up a standard for Christ in the world; and to slight them is the way to fill the world with atheism and profaneness. As it would be the sin of ministers not to administer them, so it is the sin of people not to attend on them. But 0 how does this profanation abound, by unnecessary absenting from public ordinances! It is not enough to spend the time in private. God requires both; and the one must not jostle out the other. Nothing should be admitted as an excuse in this, but what will bear weight when the conscience is sifted before God.

4. Neglecting the duties of the day when the public work is over. The Sabbath is not over when the public work is over. When we go home to our houses, we must keep the Sabbath there too (Leviticus 23:3). It ought not to be an idle time. You ought to retire by yourselves, and meditate on what you have heard, on your behaviour at the public ordinances, and be humbled for your failings; confer together about the Word, renew your calling on God in secret, and in your families, and with variety of holy exercises spend what remains of the day.

Careless performance of Sabbath duties

The Sabbath is profaned by a careless performance of the duties required. Though we perform the duties themselves, we may profane the Sabbath by the way of managing them. Now, it is a careless performance to perform them:

Hypocritically (Matthew 15:7) while the body is exercised in Sabbath's work, but the heart goes not along with it.

Carnally, in an earthly frame of spirit, the heart savouring nothing of heaven, but still of the world. Hence are so many distracting thoughts about worldly things, that the heart cannot be intent on the duty of the day (Amos 8:5).

Heartlessly and coldly. The Sabbath should be called a delight; a special vigour and alacrity is required to Sabbath duties. But 0 how flat, heartless, dead, and dull are we for the most part! so that many are quite out of their element on the Lord's Day, and never come to themselves, or any alacrity of spirit, till the Sabbath be over, and they return to their business.

To perform them with a weariness of them, or in them (Malachi 1:13). Alas! is not the Sabbath the most wearisome day of all the week to many? The rest of the Sabbath is more burdensome than the toil of other days. How will such take with heaven, where there is an eternal rest, an

everlasting Sabbath? This is a contempt of God and of His day.

Idleness on Sabbath

The Sabbath is profaned by idleness. God has made the Sabbath a rest, but not a mere rest. He never allows idleness: on the week days we must not be idle, or we mis-spend our own time. On the Lord's Day we must not be idle, or we mis-spend and profane God's time. Thus the Sabbath is idled away and profaned:

By unnecessary unseasonable sleeping in that day; lying long in the Sabbath morning, going soon to bed that night, to cut God's day as short as may be; and much more sleeping in any other time of the day, to put off the time.

By vain gadding abroad on the Lord's Day, through the fields, or gathering together about the doors, to idle away the time in company. It is very necessary that people keep indoors on the Lord's Day as much as may be; and if necessity or conveniency call them forth, that they carry their Sabbath's work with them.

By vain and idle discourse or thoughts. We must give an account of every idle word spoken on any day, far more for those spoken on the Lord's Day, which are doubly sinful.

Sinning on Sabbath

The Sabbath is profaned by doing that which is in itself sinful. To do those things on the Lord's Day that ought not to be done any day, is a sin highly aggravated. Thus the Sabbath is profaned by people's discouraging others from attending ordinances, instead of attending them themselves; swearing or cursing on that day, instead of praising God. The better the day, the worse is the deed. How fearful must their doom be who await that time for their wicked pranks, as some dishonest servants, and other naughty persons, who chuse the time that others are at church for their hidden works of dishonesty; because then they get most secrecy? And indeed the devil is very busy that way, and has brought some on to commit such things on the Sabbath Day as have brought them to an ill end.

Worldly employments and recreations on Sabbath

The Sabbath is profaned by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about worldly employments or recreations. The Sabbath is profaned:

By carnal recreations, in no way necessary nor suitable to the work of the Sabbath; such as, all carnal pleasures, sports, plays, and pastimes (Isaiah 58:13).

By following of worldly employments on that day, working or going about ordinary business, except in cases of necessity and mercy (Matthew 24:20). Though, where real necessity or mercy is, it is an abuse of that day to forbear such things, as sometimes the Jews did, who being attacked on the Lord's Day, would not defend themselves.

By unnecessary thoughts or discourse about them; for that day is a day of rest from them every way; and we should neither think of nor talk about them.

O let us be deeply humbled before the Lord under the sense of our profanations of the Sabbath! for who can plead innocent here? We are all guilty in some shape or other, and had need to flee to the atoning blood of Jesus for the expiation of this and all our other sins.

Chapter V : What are the reasons annexed to the command?

I come now to consider the reasons annexed to the Fourth Commandment. And these, according to the Catechism, are, "God’s allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, His challenging a special propriety in the seventh, His own example, and His blessing the Sabbath Day".

This command God has enforced by four reasons. The first reason is taken from the equity of this command. God has allowed us six days of seven for our own business, and has reserved but one for Himself. In dividing our time betwixt Himself and us, He has made our share great, six for one. Consider the force of this reason:

(a) We have time enough to serve ourselves in the six days, and shall we not serve God on the seventh? They that will not be satisfied with six, would as little be satisfied with sixteen. But carnal hearts are like a sand-bed to devour that which is holy. Nay:

(b) We have time enough to tire ourselves on the six days in our own employments; it is a kindness that we are obliged to rest on the Lord’s Day. Our interest is our duty, and our duty is our interest. It is a kindness to our bodies and souls too. And shall we not be engaged by it to sanctify the Sabbath?

(c) There is time enough to raise the appetite for the Sabbath. It comes so seldom, though so sweet to the exercised soul, that we may long for it, and rejoice at the return of it. It is sad if six days’ interval cannot make us find our stomach.

(d) God might have allowed us but one day, and taken six to Himself. Who could have quarrelled the Lord of time? Has He reserved but one for six, and shall we grudge it Him? The sentence of David in the parable against the rich man that took away the poor man’s one ewe lamb, is applicable here: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold," etc. (2 Samuel 12:1-31). The second reason is taken from God’s challenging a special propriety in the Sabbath Day: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God". All days are His; but this is His in a peculiar manner (Revelation 1:10). He has set a mark on it for Himself, to be reserved for Himself. Consider the force of this reason:

(a) If we have a God, it is reasonable that God should have a time set apart for His service, "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God"~ The heathens had days set apart for the honour of their idols; though the dumb idols could not demand them, yet they gave them. Papists have days set apart for saints, who are to them a sort of gods, though some of them have forbidden it, just as Paul has done. And will you not keep holy the Sabbath of the Lord thy God?

(b) It is sacrilege, the worst of theft, to profane the Sabbath Day. It is a robbing of God, a stealing from Him of time that is consecrated to Him, and that is dangerous (Proverbs 20:25). We justly blame the churches of Rome and England, for robbing people of a great many days which God has given us; but how may we blame ourselves for robbing God of the day He has kept from us, and taken to Himself? Alas! our zeal for God is far below our zeal for ourselves. They stick to their

saints' days, but how weary are we of our God's days? (Malachi 3:8). The third reason is taken from God's example, who, though He could have perfected the world in a moment, yet spent six days in it, and but six days, resting the seventh, taking a complacency in the work of His own hand; and this is an example to be imitated by us. Consider the force of this reason:

(a) God's example proposed for imitation is a most binding rule: "Be ye followers of God" (Ephesians 5:1). What God does is best done, and we must labour to write after His copy.

(b) The profaning of the Sabbath is a most eminent and signal contempt of God and of His works. Did God rest on the Sabbath, taking a complacency in the six days' works? Our not doing so is an undervaluing of what God so highly esteemed, slighting of what He so much prized, and consequently a contempt of Himself and His works too. The fourth reason is taken from His blessing the Sabbath Day. His blessing of that day is His blessing it as a means of blessing us in the keeping of it. It indicates:

(a) The Lord's putting a peculiar honour on it beyond all other days. It is the "holy of the Lord and honourable'. The King of heaven has made it the queen of days. Therefore it should be our question, What shall be done to that day the King delights to honour? Let us beware of levelling that with common things which God has advanced so far above them.

(b) That the Lord has set it apart for a spiritual blessing to His people, so that in the sanctification of that day we may look for a blessing (Isaiah 56:6-7); nay, that the Lord will multiply His blessings on that day more on His people than any other days wherein they seek it. So that, as the Lord requires more on that day than on any other days, He also gives more.

(c) That the Lord will make it even a spring of temporal blessings. He will not let the day of blessing be a curse to people in their temporal affairs. They shall be at no loss in their worldly things by the Sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:20-22). Conscientious keepers of the Sabbath will be found to thrive as well in other ways as those who are not. The force of this reason is: Firstly, God's honour by keeping of that day, that we may get His blessings on it showered down upon us. So that the profanation of the Sabbath is like profane Esau's rejecting the blessing. Secondly, it is our own interest. Is it a special day for blessing, and shall we not observe it? It is an unworthy mistake to look on the Sabbath as so much lost time. No time is so gainful as a Sabbath holily observed. And indeed the great reason of the profaning of the Sabbath may be found to lie in the following three matters:

(i) In carnality and worldly-mindedness. The Sabbath is no delight to many. Why? Because heaven would be no heaven to them, for they savour not the things of God. The heart that is drowned in the cares or pleasures of the world, all the week over, is as hard to get in a Sabbath frame, as wet wood to take fire.

(ii) Insensibleness of their need of spiritual blessings. They are not sensible of their wants, and hence they despise the blessing. He that has nothing to buy or sell can stay at home on the market day, and the full soul cares not for God's day.

(iii) The not believing of the blessing of that day. They that think they may come as good speed any day in the duties of the day as on the Lord's Day, no wonder that they count God's day, and the duties of it, as common.

Chapter VI : Application of the subject.

Let me exhort you then to beware of profaning the Sabbath. Learn to keep it holy. And therefore I would call you here to eight duties:

Remember the Sabbath Day, before it comes, to prepare for it, and let your eye be on it before the week be done. Timeously lay by your worldly employment, and go not near the borders of the Lord's Day, and strive to get your hearts in a frame suitable to the exercises of this holy day.

Make conscience of attending the public ordinances, and waiting on God in His own house on His own day. Loiter not away the Lord's Day at home unnecessaarily, seeing the Lord makes an appointment to meet His people there. This will bring leanness to your own soul, and grief of heart to him who bears the Lord's message to you.

Before you come to the public exercises, spend the morning in secret and private exercises, particularly in prayer, reading, and meditation; remembering how much your success depends upon suitable preparation. Put off your shoes before you tread the holy ground.

Do not make your attendance on the public ordinances a by-hand work, and a means for carrying on your worldly affairs. If you come to the church to meet with somebody, and to discourse or make appointments about your worldly business, it will be a wonder if you meet with the Lord. If you travel on the Lord's Day, and take a preaching by the way, it may well cheat your blinded consciences; it will not be pleasing to God, for it makes His service to stand but in the second room, while your main end is what concerns your temporal affairs. Among the Jews no man might make the mountain of the house, or a synagogue, a thoroughfare. And beware of common discourse between sermons, which is too much practised among professing people.

When you come home from the public ordinances, let it be your care, both by the way and at home, to meditate or converse about spiritual things, and what you have heard. Retire and examine yourselves as to what you have gained, and do not be as the unclean beasts, who chew not the cud. Let masters of families take account of their children and servants how they have profited, catechise and instruct them in the principles of religion, and exhort them to piety.

When you are necessarily detained from the public ordinances, let your hearts be there (Psalms 63:1-2), and do not turn that to sin which in itself is not your sin. And strive to spend the Lord's Day in private and secret worship, looking to the Lord for making up your deficiencies. As for those that tie themselves to mends service, without a due regard to having opportunities to hear the Lord's Word, their wages are bought dearly, and they have little respect to God or their own souls; and I think tender Christians will be loath to pledge themselves in this way. But, alas! few masters or servants look further than the work and wages in their engaging together! A sad argument that religion is at a low ebb.

Do not cut the Sabbath short. The church of Rome has half holy days; God never appointed any such; it is one whole day. Alas! It is a sad thing to see how the Lord's Day is consumed, as if people would make up the loss of a day out of Saturday's night and Monday's morning, which they do by cutting short the Lord's Day.

Labour to be in a Sabbath Day's frame. Let the thoughts of worldly business be far from you, and far more let worldly words and works be far from you. To press this, consider the following:

(a) It is God’s command, whereby He tries your love to Him. This day is as the forbidden fruit. Who does not condemn Adam and Eve for eating of it? O do not profane it any manner of way!

(b) Heaven will be an everlasting Sabbath, and our conversation should be heaven-like. If we grudge the Lord one day in seven, how will we digest an eternity? We are ready to complain that we are toiled with the world: why then do we not enter into His rest?

(c) The great advantage of sanctifying the Lord’s Day. He has made it a day of blessing. It is God’s deal-day; and keeps up the heart of many through the week while they think of its approach.

(d) You will bring wrath on you if you do not sanctify the Sabbath. God may plague you with temporal, spiritual, and eternal plagues. Many begin with this sin of profaning the Lord’s Day, and it brings them at length to an ill hour, both in this world and that which is to come.

Chapter 133

S. Useful Directions For Reading and Searching the Scriptures

Useful Directions For Reading and Searching the Scriptures By Thomas Boston

1. Follow a regular plan in reading of them, that you may be acquainted with the whole; and make this reading a part of your private devotions. Not that you should confine yourselves only to a set plan, so as never to read by choice, but ordinarily this tends most to edification. Some parts of the Bible are more difficult, some may seem very barren for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on it all as God’s word, not to be scorned, and read it with faith and reverence, no doubt you would find advantage.

2. Set a special mark, however you find convenient, on those passages you read, which you find most suitable to your case, condition, or temptations; or such as you have found to move your hearts more than other passages. And it will be profitable often to review these.

3. Compare one Scripture with another, the more obscure with that which is more plain, 2 Peter 1:20. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the Scriptures; and to this good use serve the marginal notes on Bibles. And keep Christ in your eye, for to him the scriptures of the Old Testament look (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices), as well as those of the New.

4. Read with a holy attention, arising from the consideration of the majesty of God, and the reverence due to him. This must be done with attention, first, to the words; second, to the sense; and, third, to the divine authority of the Scripture, and the obligation it lays on the conscience for obedience, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

5. Let your main purpose in reading the Scriptures be practice, and not bare knowledge, James 1:22, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Read that you may learn and do, and that without any limitation or distinction, but that whatever you see God requires, you may study to practice.

6. Beg of God and look to him for his Spirit. For it is the Spirit that inspired it, that it must be savingly understood by, 1 Corinthians 2:11, "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." And therefore before you read, it is highly reasonable you beg a blessing on what you are to read.

7. Beware of a worldly, fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God; and the worldly heart cannot favour them. In an eclipse of the moon, the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. So the world, in the heart, coming between you and the light of the word, keeps its divine light from you.

8. Labour to be disciplined toward godliness, and to observe your spiritual circumstances. For a disciplined attitude helps mightily to understand the scriptures. Such a Christian will find his

circumstances in the word, and the word will give light to his circumstances, and his circumstances light into the word.

9. Whatever you learn from the word, labour to put it into practice. For to him that has, shall be given. No wonder those people get little insight into the Bible, who make no effort to practice what they know. But while the stream runs into a holy life, the fountain will be the freer.

Chapter 134

S. Ye Must Be Born Again

Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you to do any thing really good and acceptable to God. While you are not born again, your best works are but glittering sins; for though the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the performance. Consider:

1. That without regeneration there is no faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is a vital act of the new-born soul. The evangelist, showing the different entertainment which our Lord Jesus had from different persons, some receiving Him, some rejecting Him, points at regenerating grace as the true cause of that difference, without which never any one would have received Him. He tells us, that "as many as received him" were those "which were born—of God" (John 1:11-13). Unregenerate men may presume; but true faith they cannot have. Faith is a flower that grows not in the field of nature. As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part.

2. Without regeneration a man’s works are dead works. As is the principle, so must the effects be: if the lungs are rotten, the breath will be unsavory; and he who at best is dead in sin, his works at best will be but dead works. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure—being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:15-16). If we could say of a man, that he is more blameless in his life than any other in the world, that he reduces his body with fasting and has made his knees as horns with continual praying, if he is not born again, that exception would mar all. As if one should say, There is a well-proportioned body, but the soul is gone; it is but a dead lump. This is a melting consideration. You do many things materially good; but God says, All these things avail not, as long as I see the old nature reigning in the man (Galatians 6:15), "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

If you are not born again:

1. All your reformation is naught in the sight of God. You have shut the door, but the thief is still in the house. It may be you are not what once you were; yet you are not what you must be, if ever you see heaven; for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

2. Your prayers are an "abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:8). It may be, others admire your seriousness; you cry as for your life; but God accounts of the opening of your mouth as one would account of the opening of a grave full of rottenness (Romans 3:13), "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Others are affected with your prayers, which seem to them as if they would rend the heavens; but God accounts them but as the howling of a dog, "They have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds" (Hosea 7:14). Others take you for a wrestler and prevailer with God; but He can take no delight in you nor your prayers, "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck;—he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol" (Isaiah 66:3). Why, because you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and

bond of iniquity!"

3. All you have done for God, and His cause in the world, though it may be followed with temporal rewards, yet it is lost as to divine acceptance. This is clear from the case of Jehu, who was indeed rewarded with a kingdom, for his executing due vengeance upon the house of Ahab, as being a work good for the matter of it because it was commanded of God, as you may see (2 Kings 9:7); yet was he punished for it in his posterity, because he did it not in a right manner (Hosea 1:4), "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." God looks chiefly to the heart: and if so, truly, though the outward appearance be fairer than that of many others, yet the hidden man of thy heart is loathsome; you look well before men, but are not, as Moses was, fair to God, as the margin has it (Acts 7:20). 0 what a difference is there between the characters of Asa and Amaziah! "The high places were not removed; nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days" (1 Kings 15:14). "Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chronicles 25:2). It may be you are zealous against sin in others, and admonish them of their duty, and reprove them for their sin; and they hate you, because you do your duty; but I must tell you, God hates you too, because you do it not in a right manner; and that you can never do, whilst you are not born again.

4. All your struggles against sin, in your own heart and life, are naught. The proud Pharisee afflicted his body with fasting, and God struck his soul, in the mean time, with a sentence of condemnation (Luke 18:1-43). Balaam struggles with his covetous temper, to that degree, that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet he would not win them by cursing Israel: but he died the death of the wicked (Numbers 31:8). All you do, while in an unregenerate state, is for yourself: therefore it will fare with you as with a subject, who having reduced the rebels, puts the crown on his own head, an loses all his good service, and his head too.

Without regeneration there is no communion with God. There is a society on earth, whose "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). But out of that society, all the unregenerate are excluded; for they are all enemies to God, as you heard before at large. Now, "can two walk together, except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3)? They are all unholy: and "what communion hath light with darkness—Christ with Belial" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). They may have a show and semblance of holiness; but they are strangers to true holiness, and therefore "without God in the world." How sad it is, to be employed in religious duties, yet to have no fellowship with God in them! You would not be content with your meat, unless it nourished you; nor with your clothes, unless they kept you warm: and how can you satisfy yourselves with your duties, while you have no communion with God in them?

Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you for heaven. None go to heaven but those who are made meet for it (Colossians 1:12). As it was with Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:7), so is it with the temple above. It is "built of stone made ready before it is brought thither"; namely, of "lively stones" (1 Peter 2:5), "wrought for the selfsame thing" (2 Corinthians 5:5); for they cannot be laid in that glorious building just as they come out of the quarry of depraved nature. Jewels of gold are not meet for swine, and far less jewels of glory for unrenewed sinners. Beggars, in their rags, are not fit for kings' houses, nor sinners to enter into the King's palace, without the raiment of needlework (Psalms 45:14-15). What wise man would bring fish out of the water to feed in his meadows? or send his oxen to feed in the sea? Even as little are the unregenerate fit for heaven,

or heaven fit for them. It would never be relished by them. The unregenerate would find fault with heaven on several accounts. As:

1. That it is a strange country. Heaven is the renewed man's native country: his Father is in heaven; his mother is Jerusalem, which is above (Galatians 4:26). He is born from above (John 3:3). Heaven is his home (2 Corinthians 5:1); therefore he looks on himself as a stranger on this earth, and his heart is homeward (Hebrews 11:16), "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly country." But the unregenerate man is the man of the earth (Psalms 10:18); written in the earth (Jeremiah 17:13). Now, "Home is home, be it never so homely"; therefore he minds earthly things (Php 3:19). There is a peculiar sweetness in our native soil; and with difficulty are men drawn to leave it, and dwell in a strange country. In no case does that prevail more than in this; for unrenewed men would quit their pretensions to heaven, were it not that they see they cannot make a better bargain.

2. There is nothing in heaven that they delight in, as agreeable to the carnal heart (Revelation 21:2?), "For there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." When Mahomet pronounced paradise to be a place of sensual delights, his religion was greedily embraced; for that is the heaven men naturally choose. If the covetous man could get bags full of gold there, and the voluptuous man could promise himself his sensual delights, they might be reconciled to heaven, and made meet for it too; but since it is not so, though they may utter fair words about it, truly it has little of their hearts.

3. Every corner there is filled with that which of all things they have the least liking for: and that is holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness, Were one that abhors swine's flesh bidden to a feast where all the dishes were of that sort of meat, but variously prepared, he would find fault with every dish at the table, notwithstanding all the art used to make them palatable. It is true, there is joy in heaven, but it is holy joy; there are pleasures in heaven, but they are holy pleasures; there are places in heaven, but it is holy ground. That holiness which is in every place, and in every thing there, would mar all to the unregenerate.

4, Were they carried thither, they would not only change their place, which would be a great heartbreak, but they would change their company too. Truly, they would never like the company there, who care not for communion with God here, nor value the fellowship of His people, at least in the vitals of practical godliness. Many, indeed, mix themselves with the godly on earth, to procure a name to themselves, and to cover the sinfulness of their hearts, but that trade cannot be managed there.

5. They would never like the employment of heaven, they care so little for it now. The business of the saints there would be an intolerable burden to them, seeing it is not agreeable to their nature. To be taken up in beholding, admiring, and praising Him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb, would be work unsuitable, and therefore unsavory to an unrenewed soul.

6. They would find this fault with it, that the whole is of everlasting continuance. This would be a killing ingredient in it to them. How would such as now account the Sabbath day a burden, brook the celebration of an everlasting Sabbath in the heavens!

Regeneration is absolutely necessary to your being admitted into heaven (John 3:3). No heaven without it. Though carnal men could digest all those things which make heaven so unsuitable for

them, yet God will never bring them thither. Therefore born again you must be, else you shall never see heaven; you shall perish eternally. For:

1. There is a bill of exclusion against you in the court of heaven, and against all of your sort, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Here is a bar before you, that men and angels cannot remove. To hope for heaven, in the face of this peremptory sentence, is to hope that God will recall His Word, and sacrifice His truth and faithfulness to your safety; which is infinitely more than to hope that "the earth shall be forsaken for you, and the rock removed out of its place."

2. There is no holiness without regeneration. It is "the new man which is created in true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24), and there no heaven without holiness, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Will the gates of pearl be opened to let in dogs and swine? No; their place is without (Revelation 22:15). God will not admit such into the holy place of communion with Him here; and will he admit them into the holiest of all hereafter? Will He take the children of the devil, and permit them to sit with Him in His throne? Or, will He bring the unclean into the city whose street is pure gold? Be not deceived; grace and glory are but two links of one chain, which God has joined, and no man shall put asunder. None are transplanted into the paradise above, but out of the nursery of grace below. If you be unholy while in this world, you will be for ever miserable in the world to come.

3. All the unregenerate are without Christ, and therefore have no hope while in that case (Ephesians 2:12). Will Christ prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive Him into their hearts? Nay, rather, will He not "laugh at their calamity," who now "set at nought all his counsel" (Proverbs 1:25-26)?

4. There is an infallible connection between a finally unregenerate state and damnation, arising from the nature of the things themselves, and from the decree of heaven which is fixed and immovable as mountains of brass (John 3:3; Romans 8:6). "To be carnally minded is death." An unregenerate state is hell in the bud. It is eternal destruction in embryo, growing daily, though you do not discern it. Death is painted on many a fair face, in this life. Depraved nature makes men meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the damned, in utter darkness. The heart of stone within you is a sinking weight. As a stone naturally goes downward, so the hard stony heart tends downward to the bottomless pit. You are hardened against reproof; though you are told of your danger, yet you will not see it, you will not believe it. But remember that the conscience being now seared with a hot iron, is a sad presage of everlasting burnings. Your unfruitfulness under the means of grace, fits you for the axe of God’s judgments (Matthew 3:10), "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The withered branch is fuel for the fire (John 15:6). Tremble at this, you despisers of the Gospel: if you be not thereby made meet for heaven, you will be like the barren ground, bearing briers and thorns, "nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned" (Hebrews 6:8). The hellish dispositions of mind, which discover themselves in profanity of life, fit the guilty for the regions of horror. A profane life will have a miserable end. "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). Think on this, you prayerless persons, you mockers of religion, you cursers and swearers, you unclean and unjust persons, who have not so much as moral honesty to keep you from lying, cheating, and stealing. What sort of a tree do you think it is, upon which these fruits grow? Is it a tree of

righteousness, which the Lord has planted? Or is it not such a one as cumbers the ground, which God will pluck up for fuel to the fire of His wrath? Your being dead in sin makes you meet to be wrapped in flames of brimstone as a winding-sheet; and to be buried in the bottomless pit, as in a grave. Great was the cry in Egypt, when the first-born in each family was dead; but are there not many families, where all are dead together? Nay, many there are who are twice dead, plucked up by the root. Sometimes in their life they have been roused by apprehensions of death and its consequences; but now they are so far on in their way to the land of darkness, that they hardly ever have the least glimmering of light from heaven. The darkness of your minds presages eternal darkness. O the horrid ignorance with which some are plagued; while others, who have got some rays of the light of reason in their heads, are utterly void of spiritual light in their hearts! If you knew your case, you would cry out, Oh! darkness! darkness! darkness! making way for the blackness of darkness for ever! The face-covering is upon you already, as condemned persons, so near are you to everlasting darkness. It is only Jesus Christ who can stop the execution, pull the napkin off the face of the condemned malefactor, and put a pardon in his hand (Isaiah 25:7). "He will destroy, in this mountain, the face of the covering cast over all people," that is, the face-covering cast over the condemned, as in Haman’s case (Esther 7:8). "As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face." The chains of darkness you are bound with in the prison of your depraved state (Isaiah 61:1). fits you to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Ah, miserable men! Sometimes their consciences stir within them, and they begin to think of amending their ways. But alas! they are in chains, they cannot do it. They are chained by the heart; their lusts cleave so fast to them, that they cannot, nay, they will not shake them off. Thus you see what affinity there is between an unregenerate state, and the state of the damned, the state of absolute and irretrievable misery. Be convinced, then, that you must be born again; put a high value on the new birth, and eagerly desire it. The text tells you, that the Word is the seed, whereof the new creature is formed: therefore take heed to it, and entertain it, as it is your life. Apply yourself to the reading of the Scripture. You that cannot read, get others to read it to you. Wait diligently on the preaching of the Word, as by divine appointment the special means of conversion; for "it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Wherefore cast not yourselves out of Christ’s way; reject not the means of grace, lest you be found to judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Attend carefully to the Word preached. Hear every sermon, as if you were hearing for eternity; take heed that the fowls of the air pick not up this seed from you, as it is sown. "Give thyself wholly to it" (1 Timothy 4:15). "Receive it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Hear it with application, looking on it as a message sent from heaven to you in particular.

Receive the testimony of the Word of God concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration.

Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just One He is.

Examine your ways by it; namely, the thoughts of your heart, the expressions of your lips, and the tenor of your life. Look back through the several periods of your life; see your sins from the precepts of the Word, and learn, from its threatening, what you are liable to on account of these sins. By the help of the same Word of God, view the corruption of your nature, as in a glass which manifests our ugly face in a clear manner. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that fear and sorrow, on account of your soul’s state, which are necessary to

prepare and stir you up to look after a Saviour. Fix your thoughts upon Him offered to you in the Gospel, as fully suited to your case; having, by His obedience unto death, perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope and faith; and move you to stretch out the withered hand unto Him, at His own command.

Let these things sink deeply into your hearts, and improve them diligently. Remember, whatever you are, you must be born again; else it had been better for you that you had never been born. Wherefore, if any of you shall live and die in an unregenerate state, you will be inexcusable, having been fairly warned of your danger.

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