

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded #3

by John Owen

Dr. John Owen emphasizes the importance of being spiritually minded by focusing on heavenly things and recognizing the dangers of earthly attachments.

Duration: 1:31:11

Scripture: Genesis 24:53, Matthew 19:21, 1 Corinthians 13:9, 2 Corinthians 4:18, 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, Hebrews 6:9, 1 John 3:2

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher provides special directions on how to discharge the duty of looking at things above and the state of future glory. He emphasizes the importance of possessing right notions and apprehensions of these spiritual realities. The preacher highlights that faith is necessary to have a prospect of these unseen things and that due consideration of the nature of God and man is required. He also addresses the various thoughts and apprehensions people have about the positive aspects of the future state, cautioning against being too attached to earthly things and encouraging a focus on spiritual growth.

Transcript

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded by Dr. John Owen Continued, Tape 3 As this lies the great danger of multitudes at this present season, for let men profess what they will, under the power of this frame their eternal state is in hazard every moment, and persons are engaged in it in great variety of degrees, and we may cast them under two heads. First, some do not at all understand that these things are amiss with them, or that they are much to be blamed. They plead, as was before observed, that they are all lawful things which their hearts do cleave to, and which it is their duty to take care of and regard.

May they not delight in their own relations, especially at such a time when others break and cancel all duties and bonds of relation in the service of and provision they make for their lusts? May they not be careful in good and honest ways of diligence about the things of the world, when the most either lavish their time away in the pursuit of bestial lusts, or heap them up by deceit and oppression? May they not contrive for the promotion of their children in the world to add the other hundred or thousand pounds to their advancement, that they may be in as good condition as others, seeing he is worse than an infidel who provides not for his own family? By such reasonings and secret thoughts do many justify themselves

in their earthly mindedness, and so fixed they are in the approbation of themselves, that if you urge them to their duty, you shall lose their acquaintance, if they do not become your enemies for telling them the truth. Yea, they will avoid one duty that lies not against their earthly interest, because it leads to another. They will not engage in religious assemblies, or be constant to their duty in them, for fear duties of charity should be required of them, or expected from them.

On what grounds such persons can satisfy themselves that they are spiritually minded, I don't know. I shall leave only one rule with persons that are thus minded. Where our love to the world has prevailed, by its reasonings, pleas, and pretenses, to take away our fear and jealousy over our own hearts, lest we should inordinately love it, there it is assuredly predominant in us.

Secondly, others are sensible of the evil of their hearts, at least are jealous and afraid, lest it should be found that their hearts do cleave inordinately unto these things. Hence they endeavor to contend against this evil, sometimes by forcing themselves to such acts of piety or charity, as are contrary to that frame, and sometimes by laboring a change of the frame itself, especially they will do so when God is pleased to awaken them by trials and afflictions, such as write vanity and emptiness on all earthly enjoyments. But for the most part they strive not lawfully, and so obtain not what they seem to aim at.

This disease with many is mortal, and will not be thoroughly cured in any but by the due exercise of this part of spiritual mindedness. There are other duties required also to the same end, namely of the mortification of our desires and affections to earthly things. But without this, or a fixed contemplation on the desirableness, beauty, and glory of heavenly things, it will not be attained.

Further to evince the truth of this, we may observe these two things first. If by any means a man do seem to have taken off his heart from the love of present things, and be not at the same time taken up with the love of the things that are heavenly, his seeming mortification is of no advantage to him. So persons frequently, though discontent, disappointments, or dissatisfaction with relations, or mere natural weariness, have left the world, the affairs, and cares of it, as to their wanted conversations in it, and have betaken themselves to monasteries, convents, or other retirements, suiting their principles without any advantage to their souls.

Secondly, God is no such severe Lord and Master as to require us to take off our affections from, and mortify them to those things which the law of our nature makes dear to us as wives, children, houses, lands, and possessions, and not propose to us some of that is incomparably more excellent to fix them upon. So he invites the elect of the Gentiles to Christ. Psalm 45 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear.

Forget also thine own people and thy father's house, that is, come into the faith of Abraham, who forsook his country and his father's house, to follow God whithersoever he pleased. But he proposes this for their encouragement. Verse 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.

The love of the great king is an abundant, satisfactory recompense for parting with all things in this world. So when Abraham's servant was sent to take Rebekah for a wife to Isaac, he required that she should immediately leave father and mother, brothers and all enjoyments, and go along with him, but with this, that she might know herself to be no loser by it. He not only assured her of the greatness of his master, but also at present he gave her jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment.

Genesis 24, 53 And when our Savior requires that we should part with all for his sake in the gospel, he promises a hundredfold in lieu of them, even in this life, namely in an interest in things spiritual and heavenly. Therefore, without an assiduous meditation on heavenly things as a better, more noble, and suitable object for our affections to be fixed on, we can never be freed in a new manner from an inordinate love of the things here below. It is sad to see some professors who will keep up spiritual duties in churches and in their families, who will speak in discourse of spiritual things and keep themselves from the open excesses of the world, yet when they come to be tried by such duties as entrench on their love and adherence to earthly things, quickly manifest how remote they are from being spiritually minded in a due manner.

Were they to be tried as our Savior tried the young man who made such a profession of his conscientious and religious conversation, Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me, something might be pleaded an excuse for their tear-giversation, but alas, they will decline their duty when they are not touched to the hundredth part of their enjoyments. I bless God, I speak not thus of many of my own knowledge, and may say with the apostle to the most of whom I usually speak in this manner, But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. Hebrews 6, 9 Yea, the same testimony may be given of many in this city, which the same apostle gives to the churches of Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 8, 1-3 Understand, the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that in a great trial of affliction and abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to their power, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves. There has been nothing done amongst us that may or can be boasted of, yet considering all circumstances that may be, there have not been more instances of true evangelical charity in any age or place for these many years.

For them who have been but useful and helpful in this, the Lord remember them for their good, and spare them according to the multitude of his mercies. It is true they have not, many of them, founded colleges, built hospitals, or raised works of state and magnificence, for very many of them are such as whose deep poverty comparatively has abounded to the riches of their liberality. The backs and bellies of multitudes of the poor and needy servants of Christ have been warmed and refreshed by them, blessing God for them.

Thanks be unto God, saith the apostle in this case, for his unspeakable gift. 2 Corinthians 9-15 Blessed be God, who has not left the gospel without this glory, nor the profession of it without this evidence of its power and efficacy. Yea, God has exalted the glory of persecutions and afflictions for many, since they that have lost much of their enjoyments by them and have all endangered continually, have abounded in duties of charity beyond what they did in the days of their fullness and prosperity.

So out of the ether there has come forth meat. And if the world did but know what fruits and a way of charity and bounty to the praise of God and glory of the gospel have been occasioned by their making many poor, it would abate of their satisfaction in their successes. But with many it is not so.

Their minds are so full of earthly things, they are so cleaved to them and their affections, that no sense of duty, no example of others, no concernment for the glory of God or the gospel can make any impressions on them. If there be yet in them so much life and light of graces to design a deliverance from this woeful condition, the means insisted on must be made use of. Especially this advice is needful to those who are rich, who of large possessions are abound in the goods of this world.

The poor, the afflicted, the sorrowful, are prompted from their outward circumstances as well as excited by inward grace, frequently to remember and to think of the things above in which lies their only reserve and relief against the trouble and urgency of their present condition. But the enjoyment of these things in abundance is accompanied with a twofold evil, lying directly contrary to this duty. A desire of increase and adding thereunto.

Earthly enjoyments enlarge men's earthly desires, and the love of them grows with their income. A moderate stock of water sufficient for our use may be kept within ordinary banks, but if a flood be turned into them, they know no bounds but overflow all about them. The increase of wealth and riches enlarges the desire of men after them beyond all bounds of wisdom, sobriety, or safety.

He that labors hard for his daily bread has seldom such earnest, vehement desires of an addition to what he has, as many have who already have more than they know how to use or almost what to do with. This they must have more, and the last advantage serves for nothing but to stir them up to look out for another. And yet such men would, on other accounts, be esteemed good Christians and spiritually minded, as all good Christians are.

They draw the heart to value and esteem them as those which bring in their satisfaction and make them to differ from those whom they see to be poor and miserable. Now these things are contrary unto, and where they are habitually prevalent, inconsistent utterly with being spiritually minded. Nor is it possible that any who in the least degree are under their power can ever attain deliverance unless their thoughts are fixed on, and their minds thereby possessed, with due apprehensions of invisible things and eternal glory.

These are some few of those many advantages which we may obtain by fixing our thoughts and meditations, and by this our affections on the things that are above. And there are some things which make me willing to give some few directions for the practice of this duty. For whatever else we are and do, we neither are nor can be truly spiritually minded, whereon life and peace depend, unless we do really exercise our thoughts to meditations of things above.

Without it all our religion is but vain. And as I fear men are generally lacking and defective in this point of practice, so I do also that many, through the darkness of their minds, the weakness of their intellectual ability, and ignorance of the nature of all things unseen, do seldom set themselves to the contemplation of them. I shall therefore give some few directions for the practice of this duty.

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded Chapter 6 Directions to the Exercise of our Thoughts on Things Above, Things Future, Invisible, and Eternal on God Himself, with the Difficulties of it and Oppositions to it in the Way of their Removal, Right Notions of Future Glory stated, We have treated in general before of the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts as to our present duty. That which we were last engaged in is, in a special instance, in heavenly things, things future and invisible, with the fountain and spring of them all in Christ and God Himself. And because men generally are unskilled in this, and great difficulties arise in the way of the discharge of this part of the duty in hand, I shall give some special directions concerning it.

First, possess your minds with right notions and apprehensions of things above and of the state of future glory. We are in this duty to look at the things which are not seen. 2 Corinthians 4.18 It is by faith only in which we have a prospect of them, for we walk by faith and not by sight.

And faith can give us no interest in them unless we have due apprehensions of them, for it is but assent and cleave to the truth of what is proposed to it. And the greatest part of mankind do both deceive themselves and feed on ashes in this manner. They fancy a future state which has no foundation but in their own imaginations.

Therefore the apostle directing us to seek in mind the things that are above adds for the guidance of our thoughts a consideration of the principal concernment of them. Where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Colossians 3.1-2 He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of those heavenly things, especially of the presence of Christ in His exaltation and glory.

Therefore the true notion of the things which we are to possess our minds with may here be considered. First, all that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness do agree in this manner that it contains in it or is accompanied with a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil. But in what is so they are not agreed.

Many esteem only those things that are grievous, troublesome, wasting, and destructive to nature to be so. That is, what is penal in pain, sickness, sorrow, loss, poverty, with all kinds of outward troubles, and death itself for evil. Therefore they suppose that the future state of blessedness will free them from all these things that they can attain to it.

This they will lay in the balance against the troubles of life, and sometimes it may be against the pleasures of it, which they must forego. A person's profane and profligate will and words at least profess that heaven will give them rest from all their troubles. But it is no place of rest for such persons.

To all others also, to believers themselves, these things are evil, such as they expect a deliverance from in heaven and glory. And there is no doubt, but it is lawful for us and meet that we should contemplate on them as those which will give us a deliverance from all outward troubles, death itself, and all that leads thereto. Heaven has promised us rest to them that are troubled.

2 Thessalonians 1.7 It is our duty, under all our sufferings, reproaches, persecutions, troubles, and sorrows, to raise up our minds to the contemplation of that state in which we shall be freed from all. It is the blessed notion of heaven that God shall therein wipe away all tears from our eyes. Revelation 7.17 Remove far from us all causes of sorrow.

And it would be to our advantage if we did accustom our minds more to this kind of relief than we do. If upon the incursion of fears, dangers, sorrows, we did more readily retreat to thoughts of that state in which we shall be freed from them all. Even this most inferior consideration of it would render the thoughts of it more familiar and the thing itself more useful to us.

Much better it were than on such occasions to be exercised with heartless complaints, uncertain hopes, and fruitless contrivances. But there is that which, to them who are truly spiritually minded, hath more evil in it than all these things together, and that is sin. Heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, from all sin, and all the causes, concomitants, and effects of it.

He is no true believer to whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. Other things, as the loss of dear relations or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind by its natural affections. In some seasons than ever, our sins did at any one time, in any one instance.

So a man may have a great trouble and sense of pain by a fit of the toothache, which will be gone in an hour, than in an hectic fever or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life. But take in the whole course of our lives and all the actings of our souls in spiritual judgment as well as in natural affection, and I do not understand how a man can be a sincere believer to whom sin is not the greatest burden and sorrow. Therefore, in the first place, it belongs to the true notion of heaven that it is a state in which we shall be eternally freed from sin and all the concernments of it, but only through the exaltation of the glory of God's grace in Christ by the pardon of it.

He that truly hates sin and abhors it, whose principal desire and design of life is to be freed from it so far as it is possible, who walks in self-abasement through a sense of his many disappointments, when he hopes it should act in him no more, cannot, as I judge, but frequently betake himself for refreshment to thoughts of that state in which he shall be freed from it and triumph over it to eternity. This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended and fixed on the mind in which we may dwell on unto the great advantage and satisfaction of our souls. Frequent thoughts and meditations on heaven under this notion do argue a man to be spiritually minded, for it is a convincing evidence that sin is a burden to him, that he longs to be delivered from it and all its consequences, that no thoughts are more welcome to him than those of that state in which sin shall be no more, and all men are troubled about their sins and would desirously be freed from them, so far as they perplex their minds and make their consciences uneasy.

Yet if they are not much in the prospect of this relief, if they find not refreshment in it, I fear their trouble is not such as it ought to be. Therefore, when men can so wrangle and wrestle with their convictions of sin and yet take up the best of their relief in hopes that it will be better with them at some time or other in this world, without longing desires after that state in which sin shall be no more, they give no evidence that they are spiritually minded. It is quite otherwise with sincere believers in the exercise of this duty, the consideration of the grace and love of God, of the blood of Christ, of the purity and holiness of that good spirit that dwells in them, of the light, grace, and mercy which they have attained through the promises of the gospel, or those which make the remainders of sin most grievous and burdensome to them.

This is that which even breaks their hearts and makes some of them go mourning all the day long. Namely, that anything of that which alone God hates should be found in them or be remaining with them. It is in this condition and evidence that they are spiritually minded, if together with watchful endeavors for the universal mortification of sin and utter excision of it.

Both root and branch, they constantly add these thoughts of, that blessed estate in which they shall be absolutely and eternally freed from all sin with refreshment, delight, and complacency. These things belong to our direction for the fixing of our thoughts and meditations on things above. This the meanest and weakest person who has the least spark of sincerity and grace is capable of apprehending and able to practice.

And it is that which the sense they have of the evil of sin will put them on every day if they shut not their eyes against the light of the refreshment that is in it. Let them who cannot rise in their minds to fixed and stable thoughts of any other notion of these invisible things dwell on this consideration of them in which they will find no small spiritual advantage in refreshment to their souls. Secondly, as to the positive part of this glorious future state, the thoughts and apprehensions of men are very various, and that we may know as well what to avoid is what to embrace.

In this case, we shall a little reflect on some of them. First, many are able to entertain no rational conceptions about a future state of blessedness and glory, no notions in which either faith or reason is concerned. Imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not.

No wonder such persons have no delight in, no use of thoughts of heaven. When their imaginations have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties for a while, they are swallowed up in nothing, glorious and therefore desirable. They take it for granted that it must be, but nothing can be so to them but what is suitable to their present dispositions, inclinations, and principles.

And hereof there is nothing in the true spiritual glory of heaven or in the eternal enjoyment of God. These things are not suited to the will of their minds and of their flesh, and therefore they cannot rise up unto any constant desires of them. Hence to please themselves, they begin to imagine what is not, but whereas what is truly heaven pleases them not.

And what does please them is not heaven nor there to be found. They seldom or never endeavor in good earnest to exercise their thoughts about it. It were well if darkness and ignorance of the true nature of the future state and eternal glory did not exceedingly prejudice believers themselves as to their delight in them and meditations about them.

They have nothing fixed or stated in their minds which they can betake themselves to in their thoughts when they would contemplate about them. And by the way, whatever doth divert the minds of men from the power and life of spiritual worship, as do all pompous solemnities in the performance of it, does greatly hinder them as to right conceptions of the future state. There was a promise of eternal life given to saints under the Old Testament, but whereas they were obliged to a worship that was carnal and outwardly pompous, they never had clear and distinct apprehensions of the future state of glory, for life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel.

Wherefore, although no man living can see or find out the infinite riches of eternal glory, yet it is a duty of all to be acquainted with the nature of it in general, so as that they may have fixed thoughts of it, love to it, earnest desires after it, all under its own true and proper notion. Secondly, so great a part of mankind is the Mohammedans, to whom God has given all the principal and most desirable parts of the world to inhabit and possess, do conceive the state of future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures. And evidence of this is that the religion which they profess has no power or efficacy on their minds to change them from the love of sin or from the place in their happiness in fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

It does not at all enlighten their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections to the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited to its rational constitution, for if it did, it would place their happiness and blessedness in them. Therefore, it is nothing but an artifice of the God of this world to blind the eyes of men to their eternal destruction. Thirdly, some of the philosophers of old did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of men in another world does consist in the full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the divine nature.

And there is a truth in this notion which contemplative men have adorned with excellent and rational discourses, and a number who have been and are learned among Christians have greatly improved this truth by the light of the Scripture. From reason, they take up with thoughts of the goodness, the amiableness, the self-sufficiency, and the all-sufficient satisfactoriness of the infinite perfections of the divine nature. These things shine in themselves with such a glorious light as that there is no more required

to a perception of them, but that men do not willfully shut their eyes against it through bestial sensuality and love of sin.

From reason also do they frame their conceptions concerning the capacity of the souls of men for the immediate enjoyment of God, and what is suited in this to their utmost blessedness. No more is required to these things, but a due consideration of the nature of God and man with our relation to Him and dependence on Him. By the light of the Scripture they frame these things into that which they call the beatifical vision, in which they intend all the ways in which God, in the highest and immediate instances, can and doth communicate of Himself to the souls of men, and the utmost elevation of their intellectual capacities to receive those communications.

It is such an intellectual apprehension of the divine nature and perfections with ineffable love it gives the soul the utmost rest and blessedness which its capacities can extend to. These things are so, and they have been by many both piously and elegantly illustrated. However, they are above the capacities of ordinary Christians.

They know not how to manage them in their minds, nor exercise their thoughts about them. They cannot reduce them to present usefulness, nor make them subservient to the exercise and increase of grace. And the truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory, not contrary to this, not inconsistent with it, but more suited to the faith and experience of believers in which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things to our minds.

This, therefore, is diligently to be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections. Fourthly, the principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness in which the meanest believers are capable of improving in daily practice is that faith shall be turned into sight and grace into glory. We walk by faith and not by sight, saith the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 5.7. Therefore, this is the difference between our present and our future state, that sight hereafter shall supply the room of faith, 1 John 3.2. And if sight come into the place of faith, then the object of that sight must be the same with the present object of our faith.

So the Apostle informs us in 1 Corinthians 13.9, 10, and 12, we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.

Though things which we now see darkly is in a glass, we shall have an immediate sight and full comprehension of. For that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part. What then is the principal present object of faith as it is evangelical and to whose room sight must succeed? Is it not the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, kindness, and power of God in Christ, the revelation of the eternal counsels of His will and the ways of their accomplishment to the eternal salvation of the church in and by Him with the glorious exaltation of Christ Himself? Therefore, in the full satisfactory representation of these things to our souls received by sight or a direct immediate intuition of them, does the glory of heaven principally consist We behold them now darkly as in a glass, that is, the utmost which by faith we can attain to in heaven.

They shall be openly and fully displayed. The infinite incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith, nor shall they be so to sight in heaven. The manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of our faith here and shall be our sight hereafter.

Only through this manifestation of them we are led, even by faith, ultimately, to acquiesce in them as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere to them with delight ineffable. This is our immediate objective glory in heaven. We hope for no other, and this, if God will, I shall shortly more fully explain.

Whoever lives in the exercise of faith and has any experience of the life, power, and sweetness of these heavenly things to whom they are a spring of grace and consolation, they are able to meditate on the glory of them in their full enjoyment. Think much of heaven as that which will give you a perfect view and comprehension of the wisdom and love and grace of God in Christ with those other things which shall be immediately declared. Some perhaps will be ready to say that if this be heaven they can see no great glory in it, no such beauty as for which it should be desired.

It may be so, for some have no instrument to take a view of invisible things but carnal imaginations. Some have no light, no principle, no disposition of mind or soul in which these things are either acceptable or suitable. Some will go no further in the consideration of the divine excellencies of God and the faculties and actings of our souls and reason will guide them, which may be of use.

But we look for no other heaven. We desire none but what we are led to and prepared for by the light of the gospel, that which shall perfect all the beginnings of God's grace in us, that which shall be quite of another nature and destructive of them. We value not that heaven which is equally suited to the desires and inclinations of the worst of men as well as of the best.

For we know that they who like not grace here neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. No man who is not acquainted experimentally of some measure with the life, power and the evidence of faith here has any other heaven in his aim but what is erected in his own imagination. The glory of heaven which the gospel prepares us for, which faith leads and conducts us to, which the soul of believers long after, is that which will give full rest, satisfaction and complacency, is a full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom, goodness and love of God in Christ and His person and mediation, with the revelation of all His counsels concerning them and the communication of their effects unto us.

He that likes it not, to whom it is not desirable, may betake himself to Muhammad's paradise or the philosopher's speculations. In the gospel heaven he has no interest. These are the things which we see now darkly as in a glass by faith, and the view of them are our souls gradually changed into the likeness of God, and the comprehension of them is that which shall give us our utmost conformity and likeness to Him in which our natures are capable.

In a sense, an experience of their reality and goodness given us by the Holy Ghost, do all our spiritual consolations and joys consist. The effects produced by them in our souls are the first fruits of glory. Our light, sense, experience and enjoyment of these things, however weak and frequently interrupted, our apprehensions of them, however dark and obscure, are the only means in which we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

To have the eternal glory of God in Christ with all the fruits of His wisdom and love, whilst we are ourselves under the full partition of the effects of them, immediately, directly revealed, proposed, made known unto us in a divine and glorious light, our souls being furnished with the capacity to behold and perfectly comprehend them, this is a heaven which, according to God's promise, we look for. But as was said, these things shall be elsewhere more fully treated of. It is true that there are a number of other things in particular that belong to the state of glory, but what we have mentioned is a fountain and spring of them all.

We can never have an immediate enjoyment of God in the immensity of His nature, nor can any created understanding conceive any such thing. God's communications of Himself to us and our enjoyment of Him shall be in and by the manifestation of His glory in Christ. He who can see no glory, who is sensible of no blessedness in these things, is a stranger unto that heaven which the Scripture reveals and which faith leads to.

It may be inquired, what is the subjective glory, or what change is to be wrought in ourselves that we may enjoy this glory? Now that consists principally as to our souls in the perfection of all grace, which is initially wrought and subjectively resides in us in this world. The grace which we have here shall not be done away as to its essence and nature, though somewhat of it shall cease as to the manner of its operation. What soul could think with joy of going to heaven, if thereby he must lose all his present light, faith, and love of God, though he be told that he should receive that in lieu of them which is more excellent and which he has no experience nor can understand of what nature it is? When the saints enter into rest, their good works do follow them.

And how can they do so if their grace do not accompany them from whence they proceed? The perfection of our present graces, which are here weak and interrupted in their operations, is the principal imminency of the state of glory. Faith shall be heightened into vision, as was proved before, which doth not destroy its nature, but cause it to cease as to its manner of operation toward things invisible. If a man have a weak, small faith in this life with little evidence and no assurance, so that he doubts of all things, questions all things, and has no comfort from what he doth believe, if afterward, through supplies of grace, he has a mighty prevailing evidence of the things believed, is filled with comfort and assurance.

This is not by a faith or grace of another kind than what he had before, but by the same faith raised to a higher degree of perfection. When our Savior cured a blind man and gave him his sight, Mark 8, at first he saw all things obscuredly and imperfectly. He saw him in his trees walking, verse 24.

But on another application of virtue to him, he saw every man clearly, verse 25. It was not a sight of another which he then received than which he had at first, only its imperfection in which he saw him in his trees walking, was taken away. Nor will our perfect vision of things above be a grace absolutely of another kind from the light of faith which we here enjoy.

Only what is imperfect in it will be done away, and it will be made fit for the present enjoyment of things here at a distance and invisible. Love shall have its perfection also, and the least alteration in its manner of operation of any grace whatever. And there is nothing that should more excite us to labor after a growth in love to God and Christ than this, that it shall to all eternity be the same in its nature and in its operations, only both the one and the other shall be made absolutely perfect.

The soul will by it be enabled to cleave to God unchangeably with eternal delight, satisfaction, and complacency. Hope shall be perfect in enjoyment, which is all the perfection it is capable of. So shall it be as to other graces.

The subjective perfection of our nature, especially in all the faculties, powers, and affections of our souls, and all their operations belong to our blessedness, nor can we be blessed without it. All the objective glory in heaven would not, in our beholding and enjoyment of it, if it were possible, make us blessed and happy if our own natures were not made perfect, freed from all disorder, irregular motions, and weak, imperfect operations. What is it, then, that must give our natures a subjective perfection? It is that grace alone whose beginnings we are here made partakers of, for therein consists the renovation of the image of God

in us, and the perfect communication of that image to us as is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost which their capacity is suited to.

And this gives us the last chance into, namely, by what means in ourselves we shall eternally abide in that state, and this is, by the unalterable adherence of our whole souls to God in perfect love and delight. This is that in which alone the soul reaches to the essence of God in the infinite, incomprehensible perfections of his nature. For the perfect nature of this divine revelation has left it under a veil, and so must we do also.

Nor do I designedly handle these things in this place, but only in the way of a direction how to exercise our thoughts about them. This is the notion of heaven which those who are spiritually minded ought to be conversant with, and the true stating of it by faith is a discriminating character of believers. This is no heaven to any others.

Those who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their initial state in this world and their incomparable transcendency to all other things cannot conceive how heavenly glory and blessedness should consist in them. A skillful man may cast away rough, unwrought diamonds as useless stones. They know not what polishing will bring them to, nor do men unskillful in the mysteries of godliness judge there can be any other glory in rough, unwrought grace.

They know not what luster and beauty the polishing of the heavenly hand will give to it. It is generally supposed that however men differ in and about religion here, yet they agree well enough about heaven. They would all go to the same heaven.

But it is a great mistake. They differ in nothing more. They would not all go to the same heaven.

How few are there who value that heavenly state which we have treated of or do understand how any blessedness can consist in the enjoyment of it. But this and no other heaven would we go to. Other notions there may be, there are of it, which being but fruits and effects of men's own imaginations, the more they dwell in the contemplation of them, the more carnal they may grow, at best the more superstitious.

But spiritual thoughts of this heaven consisting principally in freedom from all sin, in the perfection of all grace, in the vision of the glory of God in Christ, in all the excellencies of the divine nature as manifested in him, are an effectual means for the improvement of spiritual life and the increase of all grace in us. For they cannot but effect an assimilation in the mind and heart to the things contemplated on when the principles and seeds of them are already inlaid and begun. This is our first direction.

2. Having fixed right notions and apprehensions of heavenly things in our minds, it is our duty to think and contemplate greatly on them and our own concernment in them. Without this, all our speculations concerning the nature of eternal things will be of no use to us. And to your encouragement and direction, take these few short rules relating to this duty.

First, here lies a great trial whether we are spiritually minded or not by virtue of this rule. If we are risen with Christ, we will mind the things that are above. Colossians 3.1 Secondly, here lies a great means in which we may attain further degrees in that blessed frame of mind if it be already formed in us.

By virtue of that rule, beholding as in the glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. 2 Corinthians 3.18 Thirdly, here lies a great evidence whether we have a real interest

in the things above or not, whether we place our portion and blessedness in them by virtue of that rule. Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.

Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward in comparison in which all other things are but loss and dung? We shall assuredly be conversant in our minds about them. Fourthly, it cannot be imagined that a man should have in him a principle cognate and suited to things above of the same kind in nature with them, that his soul should be under the conduct of those habits of grace which strive and naturally tend to perfection, laboring greatly here under the weight of their own weaknesses, as it is with all who are truly spiritually minded and yet not have his thoughts greatly exercised about these things. 1 John 3.2-3 It were well if we would try ourselves by things of so uncontrollable evidence.

What can any object to the truth of these things or to the necessity of this duty? If it be otherwise with us, it is from one of these two causes. Either we are not convinced of the truth and reality of them, or we have no delight in them, because we are not spiritually minded. Do we think that men may turmoil themselves in earthly thoughts all the day long? And when they are freed of their affairs, but take themselves to those things that are vain and useless, without any stated converts with things above, and yet enjoy life and peace? We must take other measures of things if we intend to live to God, to be like Him, or come to the enjoyment of Him.

What is the matter with men that they are so stupid? They all generally desire to go to heaven, at least when they can live here no longer. Some, indeed, have no other regard to it, but only that they would not go to hell. But most would die the death of the righteous, and have their latter end like his.

Yet few there are who endeavor to attain a right notion of it, to try how it is suited to their principles and desires, but content themselves with such general notions of it as please their imaginations. It is no wonder if such persons seldom exercise their minds or thoughts about it, nor do they so much as pretend to be spiritually minded. But as for those who are instructed in these things, who profess their chiefest interest to lie in them, not to abound in meditation concerning them, it argues, indeed, that whatever they profess, they are earthly and carnal.

3. Again, meditators think of the glory of heaven so as to compare it with the opposite state of death and eternal misery. Few men care to think much of hell and the everlasting torments of the wicked in it. 4. Those do so leave who are in the most danger of falling therein.

5. They put far from them the evil day and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. 6. Some begin to advance an opinion that there is no such place because it is their interest and desire that there should be none. 7. Some out of profaneness make a scoff at it as though a future judgment were but a fable.

8. Most seem to think that there is but the severity of thoughts about it which it is not fit we should be too much terrified with. 9. Some transient thoughts they will have of it, but they do not suffer them to abide in their minds lest they should be too much discomposed, or they think it not consistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any man in that condition in which there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments, and their eternity by himself than in all the Scripture besides. 10.

These thoughts, in most, proceed from an unwillingness to be troubled in their sins and are useful to none. It is a height of folly for men to endeavor the hiding of themselves for a few moments from that which is unavoidably coming upon them unto eternity, and a due consideration whereof is a means for an escape

from it. 11.

But I speak only of true believers, and the more they are conversant in their thoughts about the future state of eternal misery, the greater evidence they have of the life and confidence of faith. 12. It is a necessary duty to consider it as what we were by nature obnoxious to as being children of wrath.

13. What we have deserved by our personal sins as the wages of sin is death. What we are delivered from through Jesus, the Deliverer, who saves us from the wrath to come.

15. What expression it is of the indignation of God against sin, who hath ordained toughen of old that we may be delivered from sin, kept up to an abhorrency of it, walking in humility, self-abasement, and the admiration of divine grace. 16.

This, therefore, is required of us that in our thoughts and meditations we compare this state of blessedness and eternal glory as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus, with that state of eternal misery which we had deserved, and if there be any spark of grace or of holy thankfulness in our hearts, it will be stirred up to its due exercise. 17. Some, it may be, will say that they complained before that they cannot get their minds fixed on these things.

Weakness, weariness, darkness, diversions, occasions do prevalently obstruct their abiding in such thoughts. I shall speak further to this afterward. At present, I shall only suggest two things.

First, if you cannot attain, yet continue to follow after, get your minds in a perpetual endeavor after an abode in spiritual thoughts, that you may be rising towards them every hour, yea, a hundred times a day, on all occasions, in a continual sense of duty, and sigh within yourselves for deliverance when you find disappointments or a not-continuance in them. It is the sense of that place in Romans 8, 23 to 26. Secondly, take care you go not backwards and lose what you have wrought.

If you neglect these things for a season, you will quickly find yourselves neglected by them. So I observe it every day in the hearing of the word. While persons keep up themselves to a diligent attendance on it, where they find it preached to their edification, they find great delight in it, and will undergo great difficulties for the enjoyment of it.

Let them be diverted from it for a season. After a while it grows indifferent to them. Anything will satisfy them that pretends to the same duty.

Chapter 7 OF THE GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED SPECIAL OBJECTS OF SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS ON THE GLORIOUS STATE OF HEAVEN AND WHAT BELONGS THERE FIRST OF CHRIST HIMSELF THOUGHTS OF HEAVENLY GLORY IN OPPOSITION TO THOUGHTS OF ETERNAL MISERY THE USE OF SUCH THOUGHTS AND ADVANTAGE IN SUFFERINGS IT WOULD BE TO OUR ADVANTAGE HEAVEN'S STATED RIGHT NOTIONS OF THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED STATE ABOVE IN OUR MINDS TO FIX ON SOME PARTICULARS BELONGING TO IT AS THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF OUR THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS AS NUMBER ONE THINK MUCH OF HIM WHO UNTO US IS THE LIFE AND CENTER OF ALL THE GLORY OF HEAVEN THAT IS CHRIST HIMSELF I SHALL BE VERY BRIEF IN TREATING THIS BECAUSE I HAVE DESIGNED A PECULIAR TREATISE ON THE SUBJECT OF BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF CHRIST BOTH HERE AND UNTO ETERNITY AT PRESENT THEREFORE A FEW THINGS ONLY SHALL BE MENTIONED BECAUSE ON THIS OCCASION THEY ARE NOT TO BE OMITTED THE WHOLE OF THE GLORY OF

THE STATE ABOVE IS EXPRESSED BY BEING EVER WITH THE LORD WHERE HE IS TO BEHOLD HIS GLORY FOR IN AND THROUGH HIM IS THE BEATIFICAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD AND HIS GLORY MADE FOR EVERMORE AND THROUGH HIM ARE ALL COMMUNICATIONS OF INWARD GLORY TO US THE PRESENT RESPLENDENCY OF HEAVENLY GLORY CONSISTS IN HIS MEDIATORY MINISTRY AS I HAVE AT LARGE ELSEWHERE DECLARED AND HE WILL BE THE MEANS OF ALL GLORIOUS COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN GOD AND THE CHURCH TO ETERNITY THEREFORE IF WE ARE SPIRITUALLY MINDED WE SHOULD FIX OUR THOUGHTS ON CHRIST ABOVE AS THE CENTER OF ALL HEAVENLY GLORY TO HELP US IN THIS WE MAY CONSIDER THE THINGS THAT FOLLOW 1.

FAITH HAS CONTINUAL RECOURSE TO HIM ON THE ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE DID AND SUFFERED FOR US IN THIS WORLD FOR THEREON PARDON OF SIN JUSTIFICATION AND PEACE WITH GOD DO DEPEND THIS ARISES IN THE FIRST PLACE FROM A SENSE OF OUR OWN WANTS 2. BUT LOVE OF HIM IS NO LESS NECESSARY TO US THAN FAITH IN HIM AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE POWERFUL MOTIVES TO LOVE FROM WHAT HE DID AND WAS IN THIS WORLD YET THE FORMAL REASON OF OUR ADHERENCE TO HIM THEREBY IS WHAT HE IS IN HIMSELF AND AS HE IS NOW EXALTED IN HEAVEN 3.

IF WE REJOICE NOT AT THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS PRESENT GLORY IF THE THOUGHTS OF IT BE NOT FREQUENT WITH US AND REFRESHING TO US HOW DWELLS HIS LOVE IN US 2. OUR HOPE IS THAT ERE LONG WE SHALL EVER BE WITH HIM AND IF SO IT IS CERTAINLY OUR WISDOM AND DUTY TO BE HERE WITH HIM AS MUCH AS WE CAN IT IS A VAIN THING FOR ANY TO SUPPOSE THAT THEY PLACE THEIR CHIEFEST HAPPINESS IN BEING FOREVER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WHO CARE NOT AT ALL TO BE WITH HIM HERE AS THEY MAY AND THE ONLY WAY OF OUR BEING PRESENT WITH HIM HERE IS BY FAITH AND LOVE ACTING THEMSELVES IN SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS AND IT IS AN ABSURD THING FOR MEN TO ESTEEM THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS WHO SCARCE THINK OF CHRIST ALL THE DAY LONG YET SOME AS ONE COMPLAINED OF ALL SCARCE EVER THINK OR SPEAK OF HIM BUT WHEN THEY SWEAR BY HIS NAME 3.

I HAVE READ OF THEM WHO HAVE LIVED AND DIED IN CONTINUAL CONTEMPLATION ON HIM SO FAR AS THE IMPERFECTION OF OUR PRESENT STATE WILL ADMIT 4. I HAVE KNOWN THEM I DO NOT KNOW THEM WHO CALL THEMSELVES TO A REPROOF IF AT ANY TIME HE HAS BEEN MANY MINUTES OUT OF THEIR THOUGHTS AND IT IS STRANGE THAT IT SHOULD BE OTHERWISE WITH THEM WHO LOVE HIM IN SINCERITY 5. YET I WISH I DID NOT KNOW MORE WHO GIVE EVIDENCES THAT IT IS A RARE THING FOR THEM TO BE EXERCISED IN SERIOUS THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS ABOUT HIM 6.

YEA THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE NOT AVERSE UPON OCCASIONS TO SPEAK OF GOD OF MERCY OF PARDON OF HIS POWER AND GOODNESS WHO IF YOU MENTION CHRIST TO THEM WITH ANYTHING OF FAITH LOVE TRUST IN HIM THEY SEEM TO THEM AS A STRANGE THING 7. FEW THERE ARE WHO ARE SENSIBLE OF ANY RELIGION BEYOND WHAT IS NATURAL THE THINGS OF THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD AND CHRIST ARE FLOUISHNESS TO THEM TAKE SOME DIRECTIONS FOR THE DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY 8. IN YOUR THOUGHTS OF CHRIST BE VERY CAREFUL THAT THEY ARE CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF THE WORD LEST YOU DECEIVE YOUR OWN SOULS AND GIVE UP THE CONDUCT OF YOUR AFFECTIONS TO VAIN IMAGINATIONS 9.

SPIRITUAL NOTIONS OF BEFALLING CARNAL MINDS DID ONCE BY THE MEANS OF SUPERSTITION RUIN THE POWER OF RELIGION 10. A CONVICTION MEN HAD THAT THEY MUST THINK MUCH OF JESUS CHRIST AND THAT THIS WOULD MAKE THEM CONFORMABLE TO HIM BUT HAVING NO REAL EVANGELICAL FAITH NOR THE WISDOM OF FAITH TO EXERCISE IT IN THEIR THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS IN A DUE MANNER NOR UNDERSTANDING FOOLISH INVENTIONS AND IMAGINATIONS BY WHICH THEY THOUGHT TO EXPRESS THEIR LOVE AND CONFORMITY TO HIM 11. THEY WOULD HAVE IMAGES OF HIM WHICH THEY WOULD EMBRACE, ADORE, AND BE DUE WITH THEIR TEARS 12.

THEY WOULD HAVE CRUCIFIXES AS THEY CALLED THEM WHICH THEY WOULD CARRY ABOUT THEM AND WEAR NEXT TO THEIR HEARTS AS IF THEY RESOLVED TO LODGE CHRIST ALWAYS IN THEIR BOSOMS 13. THEY WOULD GO IN PILGRIMAGE TO THE PLACE WHERE HE DIED AND ROSE AGAIN THROUGH A THOUSAND DANGERS AND PURCHASE A FAINT CHIP OF A TREE WHEREON HE SUFFERED AT THE PRICE OF ALL THEY HAD IN THE WORLD 14. THEY WOULD ENDEAVOR BY LONG THOUGHTFULNESS FASTINGS AND WATCHINGS TO CAST THEIR SOULS INTO RAPTURES AND ECSTASIES IN WHICH THEY FANCIED THEMSELVES IN HIS PRESENCE 15.

THEY CAME AT LAST TO MAKE THEMSELVES LIKE HIM AND GETTING IMPRESSIONS OF WOUNDS ON THEIR SIDES AND ON THEIR HANDS AND FEET. 16. TO ALL THESE THINGS AND A NUMBER OF OTHERS OF LIKE NATURE AND TENDENCY DID SUPERSTITION ABUSE AND CORRUPT THE MINDS OF MEN FROM A PRETENSE OF A PRINCIPLE OF TRUTH.

FOR THERE IS NO MORE CERTAIN GOSPEL TRUTH THAN THIS THAT BELIEVERS OUGHT CONTINUALLY TO CONTEMPLATE ON CHRIST BY THE ACTINGS OF FAITH IN THEIR THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS AND THAT BY THIS THEY ARE CHANGED AND TRANSFORMED INTO HIS IMAGE. of a gracious presence and intimate communion, do all depend on this duty. Therefore we may consider three things concerning the thoughts of Christ.

1. That they are exceedingly acceptable to Him, as the best pledges of our cordial affection. 2. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. 3. When a soul through manifold discouragements and despondencies withdraws, as it were, hides itself from Him, he calleth to see a poor, weeping, blubbered face, and to hear a broken voice that scarce goes beyond sighs and groans.

2. These thoughts are the only means in which we may comply with the gracious invitations of His love mentioned before. By them do we hear His knocking, know His voice, and open the door of our hearts to give Him entrance, that He may abide and sup with us. Sometimes indeed the soul is surprised into acts of gracious communion with Christ, but they are not to be expected unless we abide in those ways and means which prepare and make our souls meet for the reception and entertainment of Him.

3. Therefore, our lack of experience in the power of this holy intercourse and communion with Christ arises principally from our defect in this duty. 4. I have known one who, after a long profession of faith and holiness, fell into great darkness and distress merely on this account, that he did not experience in himself the sweetness, life and power of the testimonies given concerning the real communications of the love of Christ to, and the intimations of His presence with, believers. He knew well enough the doctrine of it, but did not feel the power of it, at least he understood there was more in it than he had experience of.

5. God carried him by faith through that darkness, but taught him withal that no sense of these things was to be let into the soul, but by constant thoughtfulness and contemplations on Christ. How many blessed visits do we lose by not being exercised to this duty? See Canticles 5.1-3. Sometimes we are so busy, sometimes careless and negligent, sometimes slothful, sometimes under the power of temptation, so that we neither inquire after nor are ready to receive them. This is not the way to have our joys abound.

4. I speak now with special respect to him in heaven. The glory of his presence has God and man eternally united, the discharge of his mediatory office as he is at the right hand of God, the glory of his presence acting for the church as he is the minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which God has fixed and not man, the love, power and efficacy of his intercession, in which he takes care for the accomplishment of the salvation of the church, the approach of his glorious coming to judgment, are to be the objects of our daily thoughts and meditations. 5. Let us not mistake ourselves.

To be spiritually minded is not to have the notion and knowledge of spiritual things in our minds. It is not to be constant, nor to abound in the performance of duties, both which may be where there is no grace in the heart at all. It is to have our minds really exercise with delight about heavenly things, the things that are above, especially Christ himself as at the right hand of God.

5. Again, so think of eternal things as continually to lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life. This use of it I have spoken unto somewhat before, and it is necessary it should be pressed upon all occasions. It is very probable that we shall yet suffer more than we have done.

Those who have gone before us have done so. It is foretold in the Scripture that if we will live godly in Christ Jesus, we must do so. We stand in need of it, and the world is prepared to bring it on us.

And as we must suffer, so it is necessary to the glory of God and our own salvation that we suffer in due manner. Mere sufferings will neither commend us to God, nor in any way advantage our own souls. When we suffer according to the will of God, it is an imminent grace, gift, and privilege Philippians 1.29. But many things are required to this.

It is not enough that men suppose themselves to suffer for conscience' sake, though if we do not so suffer, all our sufferings are in vain. Nor is it enough that we suffer for this or that way of profession and religion, which we esteem to be true and according to the mind of God, in opposition to what is not so. The glory of sufferings on these accounts solely has been much sullied in the days in which we live.

It is evident that persons out of a natural courage, accompanied with deep, errant persuasions, and having their minds influenced with some sinister ends, may undergo things hard and difficult in giving testimony to what is not according to the mind of God, examples we have had hereof in all ages, and in that in which we live and in a special manner. See 1 Peter 4.14-16. We have had enough to take off all paint and appearance of honor from them who in their sufferings are deceived in what they profess. But men may, from the same principles, suffer for what is needed according to the mind of God.

Yea, they may give their bodies to be burned therein, and yet not to His glory, nor their own eternal advantage. Wherefore we are duly to consider all things that are requisite to make our sufferings acceptable to God, and honorable to the gospel. I have observed in many a frame of spirit, with respect to sufferings, that I never saw a good event of when it was tried to the uttermost.

Boldness, confidence, a pretended contempt of hardships and scorning other men whom they supposed effective in these things, are the garments or livery they wear on this occasion. Such principles may carry men out in a bad cause, they will never do so in a good cause. Evangelical truth will not be honorably witnessed to, but by evangelical grace.

Distrust of ourselves, a due apprehension of the nature of the evils to be undergone, and of our own frailty, with continual prayers to be delivered from them or supported under them, and prudent care to avoid them without an inroad, or conscience, or neglect of duty, or much better preparations for an entrance into a state of suffering. Many things belong to our learning to write this first and last lesson of the gospel, namely of bearing the cross, or undergoing all sorts of sufferings for the profession of it, but they belong not to our present occasion. This is only that which we now press as an evidence of our sincerity in our sufferings, and an effectual means to enable us cheerfully to undergo them.

Which is to have such a continual prospect of the future state of glory, as to lay it in the balance against all that we may undergo. For number one, to have our minds filled and possessed with thoughts thereof, will give us an alacrity in our entrance into sufferings in a way of duty. Other considerations will offer themselves to our relief, which will quickly fade and disappear.

They are like a gorge of water, which gives a little relief for a season, and then leaves the spirits to sink beneath what they were before it was taken. Some relieve themselves from the consideration of the nature of their sufferings. They are not so great, but that they may conflict with them and come off with safety.

But there is nothing of that kind so small as will not prove too hard and strong for us, unless we have a special assistance. Some do the same from their duration, there but for ten days or six months, and then they shall be free. Some from the compassion and esteem of men.

These and the like considerations are apt to occur to the minds of all sorts of persons, whether they are spiritually minded or not. But when our minds are accustomed to thoughts of the glory that shall be revealed, we shall cheerfully entertain every way and path that leads thereto, as suffering for the truth doth in a peculiar manner. Through this medium we may look cheerfully and comfortably on the loss of name, reputation, goods, liberty, life itself, as knowing in ourselves that we have better and more abiding comforts to betake ourselves to.

And we can no other way glorify God by our alacrity at the entrance of sufferings than when it arises from a prospect into invaluation of those invisible things which He has promised as an abundant recompense for all we can lose in this world. The great aggravation of sufferings is their long continuance without any rational appearance or hope of relief. Many who have ventured into sufferings with much courage and resolution have been wearied and worn out with their continuance.

Elijah himself was hereby reduced to pray that God would take away his life to put an end to his ministry and calamities. And not a few in all ages have been by this so broken in their natural spirits and so shaken in their exercise of faith as that they have lost the glory of their confession and seeking deliverance by sinful compliances and the denial of truth. And although this may be done out of mere weariness, as it is the design of Satan to wear out the saints of the Most High with reluctance of mind and a love yet remaining to the truth in their hearts, yet hath it constantly one of these two effects, some by the overwhelming sorrow that befalls them on the account of their failure in profession, and out of a deep sense of their unkindness to the Lord Jesus, are stirred up immediately to higher acts of confession than ever they were before engaged in, and to a higher provocation of their adversaries, till their former troubles

are doubled upon them, which they frequently undergo with great satisfaction.

Instances of this nature occur in all stories of great persecutions, others being cowed and discouraged in their profession, and perhaps neglected by them whose duty it was rather to restore them, and by the craft of Satan given place to their declensions and become vile apostates. To prevent these evils arising from the duration of sufferings without a prospect of deliverance, nothing is more prevalent than a constant contemplation on the future reward and glory. So the apostle declares it in Hebrews 11.35, When the mind is filled with the thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath then readiness what to lay in the balance against a long continuance and duration of sufferings, which in comparison to it at their utmost extent are but for a moment.

I have insisted the longer on these things, because they are the peculiar objects of the thoughts of them that are indeed spiritually minded. Chapter 8 Spiritual Thoughts of God Himself I have spoken very briefly to the first particular instance of the heavenly things that we are to fix our thoughts upon, namely, the person of Christ, and I have done it on the reason before mentioned, namely, that I intend a peculiar treatise on that subject, or an inquiry how we may behold the glory of Christ in this life, and how we do so in eternity, that which I have reserved to the last place is to the exercise of their thought about who were spiritually minded, and that which is the absolute foundation and spring of all spiritual things, namely, God Himself. He is the fountain whence all these things proceed, and the ocean wherein they issue.

He is their center and circumference, in which they all begin, meet, and end. So the apostle issues his profound discourse of the counsels of the divine will and mysteries of the gospel, Romans 9.36. Of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. All things arise from his power, and are all disposed by his wisdom into a tendency to his glory.

Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. Under that consideration alone are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditation, namely as they come from him and tend to him. All other things are finite and limited, but they begin and end in that which is immense and infinite.

So God is all in all. He therefore is or ought to be the only supreme absolute object of our thoughts and desires. Other things are from and for him only.

When our thoughts do not either immediately, and directly, or immediately, and by just consequence tend to and end in him, they are not spiritual, 1 Peter 1.21. To make way for directions, how to exercise our thoughts on God himself, something must be premised concerning a sinful defect in this with the cause of it. First, it is the great character of a man presumptuously and flagitiously wicked that God is not in all his thoughts, Psalm 10.4, that is, he is in none of them. And of this lack of thoughts of God there are many degrees, for all wicked men are not equally so forgetful of him.

First, some are under the power of atheistical thoughts. They deny your question, or do not avowedly acknowledge the very being of God. This is the height of what the enmity of the carnal mind can rise to.

To acknowledge God, and yet to refuse to be subject to his law or will, a man would think were as bad, if not worse, than to deny the being of God, but it is not so. That is a rebellion against his authority, this a hatred to the only fountain of all goodness, truth, and being, and that because they cannot own it, but withal they must acknowledge it to be infinitely righteous, holy, and powerful, which would destroy all their desires and security. Such may be the person in the psalm.

For the words may be read, All his thoughts are that there is no God. Howbeit the context describes him as one who rather despises his providence than denies his being. But such there are, whom the same psalmist elsewhere brands for fools, though themselves seem to suppose that wisdom was born and will die with them.

Psalm 14, 1 and 53, verse 1 It may be, never any age since the flood did more abound with open atheism among such as pretended to the use and improvement of reason than that in which we live. Among the ancient civilized heathen we hear ever and anon of a person branded for an atheist, yet we are not certain whether it was done justly or not. But in all nations of Europe at this day, cities, courts, towns, fields, armies abound with persons who, if any credit may be given to what they say or do, believe not that there is a God, and the reason of this may be a little inquired into.

Now this is no other in general but that men have decocted and wasted the light and power of Christian religion. It is the fullest revelation of God that ever he made, it is the last that ever he will make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against the light of it, if they break the cords of it and are senseless of its power, nothing can preserve them from the highest atheism that the nature of man is capable of.

It is in vain to expect relief or preservation from inferior means when the highest and most noble are rejected. Reason or the light of nature gives evidences to the being of God, and arguments are still well pleaded from them to the confusion of atheists, and they were sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the divine power and Godhead, who had no other, no higher evidences of them. But where men have had the benefit of divine revelation, where they have been educated in the principles of Christian religion, have had some knowledge and made some profession out of them, and have, through the love of sin and hatred of everything that is truly good, rejected all convictions from them concerning the being, power, and rule of God, they will not be kept to a confession of them by any considerations that the light of nature can suggest.

There are, therefore, among other three reasons why there are more atheists among them who live where the Christian religion is professed, and the power of it rejected, than among any other sort of men, even then there were among the heathens themselves. 1. God is designed to magnify his word above all his name, or all other ways of the revelation of himself to the children of men. Psalm 138, verse 2. Where therefore this is rejected and despised, he will not give the honor to reason or to the light of nature, that they shall preserve the minds of men from any evil whatever.

Reason shall not have the same power and efficacy on the minds of men, who reject the light and power of divine revelation by the word, as it has or may have on them whose best guide it is, who never enjoy the light of the gospel. And therefore there is oft times more common honesty among civilized heathens and Mohammedans than amongst the degenerate Christians, and for the same reason the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. It will be said, Many are recovered to God by afflictions who have despised the word, but it is otherwise.

Never any were converted to God by afflictions who had rejected the word. Men may by afflictions be recalled to the light of the word, but none are immediately turned to God by them. As a good shepherd, when a sheep wanders from the flock and will not hear his call, sends out his dog, which stops him and bites him.

Hereon he looks about him, and hearing the call of the shepherd, returns again to the flock. Job 33, 19-25 But with this sort of persons it is the way of God, that when the principal means of the revelation of himself,

and wherein he does most glorify his wisdom and his goodness, are despised, he will not only take off the efficacy of inferior means, but judicially harden the hearts and blind the eyes of men, and that such means shall be of no use to them. See Isaiah 6, 9, 10, Acts 13, 40, 41, Romans 1, 21, 28, 2 Thessalonians 2, 11, 12 2 The contempt of gospel light in Christian religion, as it is supernatural, which is a beginning of transgression to all atheists among us, begets in and leaves on the mind such a depraved, corrupt habit, such a conjuries of all evils, that the hatred of the goodness, wisdom, and grace of God can produce, that it cannot but be wholly inclined to the worst of evils, as all our original vicious inclinations succeeded immediately on our rejection and loss of the image of God.

The best things corrupted yield the worst savour, as manna stunk in breadworms. The knowledge of the gospel being rejected, stinking worms take the place of it in the mind, which grows into vipers and scorpions. Every degree of apostasy from gospel truth brings in a proportionate degree of inclination of wickedness into the hearts and minds of men, 2 Peter 2, 21, that which is total to all the evils that are capable of in this world.

Whereas therefore multitudes, from their darkness of unbelief, temptation, love of sin, pride, and contempt of God, do fall off from all subjection of soul and conscience to the gospel, either notionally or practically, deriding or despising all supernatural revelations, they are a thousand times more disposed to downright atheism than persons who never had the light or benefit of such revelations. Take heed of decays! Whatever ground the gospel loses in our minds, sin possesses it for itself and its own ends. Let none say it is otherwise with them.

Men grow cold and negligent in the duties of gospel worship, public and private, which is to reject gospel light. Let them say and pretend what they please, that in other things in their minds and conversations it is well with them. Indeed, it is not so.

Sin will, sin doth, one way or other, make an increase in them proportionate to these decays, and will sooner or later discover itself so to do. And themselves, if they are not utterly hardened, may greatly discover it inwardly in their peace or outwardly in their lives. 3 Where men are resolved not to see, the greater the light is that shines above them, the faster they must close their eyes.

All atheism springs from a resolution not to see things invisible and eternal. Love of sin, a resolved continuance in the practice of it, the effectual power of vicious inclinations in opposition to all that is good, make it the interest of such men that there should be no God to call them to an account. For a supreme, unavoidable judge, an eternal rewarder of good and evil, is inseparable from the first notion of a divine being.

Whereas, therefore, the most glorious light and uncontrollable evidence of these things shines forth in the Scripture, men that will abide by their interest to love and live in the sin must close their eyes with all the arts and powers that they have, or else it will pierce into their minds to their torment. This they do by downright atheism, which alone pretends to give them security against the light of divine revelation. Against all other convictions, they might take shelter from their fears under less degrees of it.

It is not, therefore, to the disparagement but honor of the gospel that so many avow themselves to be atheists in those places in which the truth of it is known and professed. For none can have the least inclination or temptation to it until they have beforehand rejected the gospel, which immediately exposes them to the worst of evils. Nor is there any means for the recovery of such persons.

The opposition that has been made to atheism, with arguments for the divine being and existence of God, taken from reason and natural light, in this and other ages, has been of good use to cast contempt on the pretences of evil men to justify themselves and their folly. But that they have so much as changed the minds of any, I much doubt. No man is under the power of atheistical thoughts, or can be so long, but he that is ensnared into them by his desire to live securely and uncontrollably in sin.

Such persons know it to be their interest that there should be no God, and are willing to take shelter under the bold expressions and reasonings of them who by the same means have hardened and blinded their minds into such foolish thoughts. But the most rational argument for the being of the deity will never prove an effectual cure unto a predominant love of, and habitual course in sin, in them who have resisted and rejected the means and motives to that end declared in divine revelation. And unless a love of sin be cured in the heart, thoughts in the acknowledgment of God will not be fixed in the mind.

2. There are those of whom also it may be said that God is not in all their thoughts, though they acknowledge his essence and being, for they are not practically influenced in anything by the notions they have of him, such as the person of whom this is affirmed in Psalm 10. 4. He is one who, through pride and profligacy, with hardness and sin, regards not God and the rule of the world. Verses 4, 5, 11, and 13.

Such is the world filled with at this day as they are described in Titus 1. 16. They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. They think, they live, they act in all things, as if there were no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and reverence.

And for the most part we need not seek far for evidences of their disregard of God. The pride of their countenances testifies against them, Psalm 10. 4. And if they are followed further, curse and use, licentiousness of life, and hatred of all that is good, will confirm in evidence the same.

Such as these may own God in words, may be afraid of him in dangers, may attend outwardly on his worship, but they think not of God at all in due manner. He is not in all their thoughts. 3. There are yet less degrees of this disregard of God and forgetfulness of him.

Some are so filled with thoughts of the world and the occasions of life that it is impossible that they should think of God as they ought. For as the love of God and the love of the world in prevalent degrees are inconsistent, for if a man loved this world, how dwells the love of God in him? So thoughts of God and of the world in the like degree are inconsistent. This is the state of many who yet would be esteemed spiritually minded.

4. They are continually conversant in their minds about earthly things. Some things impose themselves on them under the notion of duty. They belong to their callings, they must be attended to.

Some are suggested to their minds from daily occasions and occurrences. Common converse in the world engages men into no other but worldly thoughts. Love and desire of earthly things, their enjoyment and increase, exhaust the vigor of their spirits all the day long.

In the midst of a multitude of thoughts arising from these and the like occasions, while their hearts and heads are reeking with esteem of them, many fall immediately in their seasons to the performance of holy duties. Those times must suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding such duties, what through the lack of a due preparation for them, what through the fullness of their minds and affections with other

things, and what through a neglect of exercising grace in them, it may be said comparatively that God is not in all their thoughts.

5. I pray God that this, at least to some degrees of it, be not the condition of many amongst us. I speak not now of men who visibly and openly live in sin, profane in their principles and profligate in their lives. The prayers of such persons are an abomination to the Lord, neither have they ever any thoughts of Him which He does accept.

But I speak of them who are sober in their lives, industrious in their callings, and not openly negligent about the outward duties of religion. Such men are apt to approve themselves and others also to speak well of them, for these things are in themselves commendable and praiseworthy. But if they are traced home, it will be found as to many of them that God is not in all their thoughts as He ought to be.

Their earthly conversation, their vain communication with their foolish designs, do all manifest at the vigor of their spirits, and most intense contrivances of their minds are engaged to things below. Some refuse transient, unmanaged thoughts, or sometimes cast away on God which He despises. 4. Where persons do cherish secret predominant lusts in their hearts and lives, God is not in their thoughts as He ought to be.

He may be. He often is much in the words of such persons, but in their thoughts He is not. He cannot be in a due manner.

In such persons no doubt there are. Ever and anon we hear of one and another whose secret lusts break forth into a discovery. They flatter themselves for a season, but God oftentimes shall order things in His holy providence that their iniquities shall be found out to be hateful.

Some hateful lusts discover themselves to be predominant in them. One is drunken, another unclean, a third an oppressor. Such there were ever found among professors of the gospel.

In fact, in the best of times, among the apostles, one was a traitor, a devil. Of the first professors of Christianity, there were those whose God was their belly, whose end was destruction, who minded earthly things. Philippians 3.18 and 19.

Some may take advantage of this acknowledgement that there are such evils among such as are called professors, and it must be confessed that great scandal is given by this to the world, casting both them that give it and them to whom it is given under a most dreadful woe. But we must bear their approach of it as they did of old, and commit the issue of all things to the watchful care of God. However, it is good in such a season to be jealous over ourselves and others, to exhort one another daily, while it is cold today, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrew 3.13. And because those with whom it is thus cannot be spiritually minded, and yet there are some difficulties in the case as to the predominancy of a secret lust or sin, I shall consider it somewhere more distinctly. We must distinguish between a time of temptation in some, and the ordinary state of mind and affections in others. There may be a season in which God, in His holy wise ordering of all things toward us and for His own glory, in His holy blessed ends, may suffer a lust or corruption to break loose in the heart, to strive, tempt, suggest, tumultuate, to the great trouble and disquietude of the mind and conscience.

Neither can it be nigh but that, falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it may proceed so far as to surprise a person in whom it is, and to actual sin, to his defilement and amazement. In this case no man can say, I am tempted of God, for God tempts no man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. But yet temptations of whatsoever sort they be, be so far as they are afflictive, corrective, or penal, are ordered and disposed by God Himself.

For there is no evil of that nature, and He has not done it. And where He will have the power of any corruption to be afflictive in any instance, two things may safely be ascribed to Him. 1 He withholds the supplies of that grace in which it might be effectually mortified and subdued.

He can give in a sufficiency of efficacious grace to repel any temptation, to subdue any or all our lusts and sins, for He can and does work in us to will and to do according to His pleasure. Ordinarily He does so in them that believe, so that although their lusts may rebel and war, they cannot defile or prevail. But to the continual supplies of their actual prevailing grace He is not obliged.

When it may have a tendency to His holy ends, He may and doth withhold it. When it may be, a proud soul is to be humbled, a careless soul to be awakened, and an unthankful soul to be convinced and rebuked, a backsliding soul to be recovered, a froward, selfish, passionate soul to be broken and meekened, He can leave them for a season to the sore exercise of a prevalent corruption, which under His holy guidance shall contribute greatly to His blessed ends. It was so in the temptation of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, 7 and 9. If a man through disorder and excesses is contracting any habitual distempers of body, which gradually and insensibly tend to his death, it may be an advantage to be cast into a violent fever, which threatens immediately to take away his life, for he will by this be thoroughly awakened to the consideration of his danger, and not only labor to be freed from his fever, but also for the future to watch against those disorders and excesses which cast him into that condition.

And sometimes a loose, careless soul that walks in a secure, formal profession contracts many spiritual diseases, which tend unto death and ruin. No arguments or considerations can prevail with him to awaken himself to shake himself out of the dust, and to betake himself to a more diligent and humble walk with God. In this state, it may be, through the permission of God, he is surprised into some open actual sin.

Hereon, through the vigorous actings of an enlightened conscience, and the stirrings of any sparks of grace which yet remain, he is amazed, terrified, and stirs up himself to seek after deliverance. God may in death and his providence administer objects and occasions of men's lusts for their trial. He will place them in such relations, in such circumstances, as shall be apt to provoke their affections, passions, desires, and inclinations to those objects that are suited to them.

In this state, any lust will quickly get such power in the mind and affections as to manage continual solicitations to sin. It will not only dispose the affections towards it, but multiply thoughts about it, and darken the mind as to those considerations which ought to prevail unto its mortification. In this condition, it is hard to conceive how God should be in the thoughts of men in a new manner.

However, this state is very different from the habitual prevalency of any secret sin or corruption in the ordinary course of men's walking in the world, and therefore I do not directly intend it. I have been reading *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded* by John Owen. My own thoughts concerning this book is that there is going to be very little interest in them.

I see this as a reader of theology and the type of books that are read, the type of arguments that people like to argue about theologically. It has to do with Calvinism or maybe infant baptism. One of the more prevalent things is what version of the Bible we should use, eschatology, that's another favorite.

But such things as being spiritually minded, the mortification of sin, self-examination, a lot of these things are not popular subjects and people aren't that interested in them. So the fact that you've gotten this far in this cassette is a pretty good sign that you have at least some desire to be spiritually minded. I can say for myself, it really convicts me as I read this and examine my own life.

Sometimes I feel like I need to be born again and again. I know there's no such thing, but there are fresh renewals of repentance that we need to do. Father, I thank you for this opportunity to narrate for Sermon Audio.

I wish I lived up to the light that I have, but I must keep reading because of the impression it makes on my own heart. And I pray that it would have the same effect on those who hear it. For we ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

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