

The Excellency of Christ

by Jonathan Edwards

The sermon highlights the conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ, demonstrating his infinite highness and condescension, infinite justice and grace, and infinite glory and humility.

Duration: 1:49:52

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28-30, Romans 3:25-26, Revelation 5:5-6, Revelation 5:9-14

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon by Jonathan Edwards, he preaches on the excellency of Christ, focusing on Revelation 5:5-6. Edwards emphasizes that it is unnecessary for people to labor and toil for things that cannot satisfy their souls. He urges them to listen to him and partake in the goodness and satisfaction that Christ offers. Edwards highlights the abundant provision that Christ has made and assures listeners that if they come to Him, all their needs will be met and they will find true happiness. The sermon also references Proverbs 9 and celebrates the glorious act of Christ's sacrifice, which is praised by the angels in heaven.

Transcript

The Excellency of Christ, a sermon by Jonathan Edwards, Revelation chapter 5 verses 5 and 6. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, 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.

The visions and revelations that the Apostle John had of the future events of God's providence are here introduced with a vision of the book of God's decrees by which those events were foreordained, which is represented in the first verse of this chapter as a book in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, written within, and on the back side, and sealed with seven seals. Books, in the form in which they were wont of old to be made, were broad leaves of parchment, or paper, or something of that nature, joined together at one edge, and so rolled up together, and then sealed, or some way fastened together, to prevent their unfolding and opening. Hence we read of the role of a book, Jeremiah chapter 36 verse 2. It seems to have been such a book that John had a vision of here, and therefore to said to be written within, and on the back side, that is, on the inside pages, and also on one of the outside pages, that is, that that was rolled in, in rolling the book up together.

And it is said to be sealed with seven seals, to signify that what was written in it was perfectly hidden and secret, or that God's decrees of future events are sealed, and shut up from all possibility of being

discovered by creatures, till God is pleased to make them known. We find that seven is often used in Scripture as the number of perfection, to signify the superlative, or most perfect degree of anything, which probably came from that, that on the seventh day God beheld the works of creation finished, and rested and rejoiced in them, as being complete and perfect. When John saw this book, he tells us he saw a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.

And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And that he wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, neither to look thereon. And then tells us how his tears were dried up, that is, that one of the elders said unto him, Weep not, behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed, etc., as in the text.

Though no man, nor angel, nor any mere creature, was found either able to loose the seals, or worthy to be admitted to the privilege of reading the book, yet this was declared for the comfort of this beloved disciple, that Christ was found both able and worthy. And we have an account in the succeeding chapters how he actually did it, opening the seals in order, first one, and then another, revealing what God had decreed should come to pass hereafter. And we have an account in this chapter of his coming and taking the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne, and of the joyful praises that were sung to him in heaven and earth on that occasion.

Many things might be observed in the words of the text, but tis to my present purpose only to take notice of the two distinct appellations here given to Christ. One, he is called a lion. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah.

He seems to be called the lion of the tribe of Judah in allusion to what Jacob said in Blessing of the Tribes on his deathbed, who, when he came to bless Judah, compares him to a lion. Genesis chapter 49 verse 9. Judah is a lion's whelp, from the prey my son art gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall raise him up? And also to the standard of the camp of Judah in the wilderness, on which was displayed a lion according to the ancient tradition of the Jews.

Tis much on account of the valiant act of David that the tribe of Judah, of which David was, is in Jacob's prophetic blessing compared to a lion, but more especially with an eye to Jesus Christ, who also was of that tribe and was descended of David, and is in our text called the root of David, and therefore Christ is here called the lion of the tribe of Judah. Two, he is called a lamb. John was told of a lion that had prevailed to open the book and probably expected to see a lion in his vision, but while he is expecting, behold, a lamb appears to open the book, an exceeding diverse kind of creature from a lion.

A lion is a devourer, one who is wont to make terrible slaughter of others, and no creature more easily falls a prey to him than a lamb, and Christ is here represented not only as a lamb, a creature very liable to be slain, but a lamb as it had been slain, that is, with the marks of its deadly wounds appearing on it. That which I would observe from the words for the subject of my present discourse is this. The doctrine is this.

There is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ. The lion and the lamb, though very diverse kinds of creatures, yet have each their peculiar excellencies. The lion excels in strength, and in the majesty of his appearance and voice.

The lamb excels in meekness and patience, besides the excellent nature of the creature as good for food, and yielding that which is fit for our clothing, and being suitable to be offered in sacrifice to God. But we

see that Christ is in the text compared to both, because the diverse excellencies of both wonderfully meet in him. In handling the subject, I would, one, show wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ.

Two, how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts, and then make application. One, I would show wherein there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ, which appears in three things. First, there is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse one from another.

Second, there is in him a conjunction of such really diverse excellencies as otherwise would have seemed to us utterly incompatible in the same subject. And third, such diverse excellencies are exercised in him towards men that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised towards the same object. First, there is a conjunction of such excellencies in Christ as, in our manner of conceiving, are very diverse from one another.

Such are the various divine perfections and excellencies that Christ is possessed of. Christ is a divine person, or one that is God, and therefore has all the attributes of God. The difference there is between these is chiefly relative, and in our manner of conceiving them.

And those that in this sense are most diverse do meet in the person of Christ. I shall mention two instances. One, there do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension.

Christ, as he is God, is infinitely great and high above all. He is higher than the kings of the earth, for he is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is higher than the heavens and higher than the highest angels of heaven.

So great is he that all men, all kings and princes, are as worms of the dust before him. All nations are as the drop of the bucket, and the light dust of the balance. Yea, and angels themselves are as nothing before him.

He is so high that he is infinitely above any need of us, above our reach, that we cannot be profitable to him, and above our conceptions that we cannot comprehend him. Proverbs chapter 30 verse 4. What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? Our understandings, if we stretch them never so far, can't reach up to his divine glory. Job chapter 11 verse 8. It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Christ is the creator and great possessor of heaven and earth.

He is sovereign Lord of all. He rules over the whole universe, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him. His knowledge is without bound, his wisdom is perfect, and what none can circumvent.

His power is infinite, and none can resist him. His riches are immense and inexhaustible, his majesty is infinitely awful. And yet he is one of infinite condescension.

None are so low or inferior, but Christ's condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of them. He condescends not only to the angels, humbling himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, but he also condescends to such poor creatures as men, and that not only so as to take notice of princes and great men, but of those that are of meanest rank and degree. The poor of the world, James 2.5, such as are commonly despised by their fellow creatures, Christ does not despise.

First Corinthians chapter 1 verse 28, base things of the world and things that are despised hath God chosen. Christ condescends to take notice of beggars, Luke chapter 16 verse 22, and of servants and people of the most despised nations. In Christ Jesus is neither barbarian, Scythian bond nor free.

Colossians chapter 3 verse 11. He that is thus high condescends to take a gracious notice of little children. Matthew chapter 19 verse 14.

Suffer little children to come unto me. Yea, which is much more, his condescension is sufficient to take a gracious notice of the most unworthy sinful creatures, those that have no good deservings, and those that have infinite ill deservings. Yea, so great is his condescension that it is not only sufficient to take some gracious notice of such as these, but sufficient for everything that is an act of condescension.

His condescension is great enough to become their friend. It is great enough to become their companion, to unite their souls to him in spiritual marriage. It is great enough to take their nature upon him, to become one of them, that he may be one with them.

Yea, it is great enough to abase himself yet lower for them, even to expose himself to shame and spitting. Yea, to yield up himself to an ignominious death for them. And what act of condescension can be conceived of greater? Yet such an act as this has his condescension yielded to for those that are so low and mean, despicable and unworthy.

Such a conjunction of such infinite highness and low condescension in the same person is admirable. We see by manifold instances what a tendency and high station has in men to make them to be of a quite contrary disposition. If one worm be a little exalted above another by having more dust or a bigger dunghill, how much does he make of himself? What a distance does he keep from those that are below him? And a little condescension is what he expects should be made much of and greatly acknowledged.

Christ condescends to wash our feet, but how would great men, or rather the bigger worms, account themselves debased by acts of far less condescension? To their meet in Jesus Christ infinite justice and infinite grace. As Christ is a divine person, he is infinitely holy and just, infinitely hating sin and disposed to execute condign punishment for sin. He is the judge of the world and is the infinitely just judge of it and will not at all acquit the wicked or by any means clear the guilty.

And yet he is one that is infinitely gracious and merciful. Though his justice be so strict with respect to all sin and every breach of the law, yet he has grace sufficient for every sinner and even the chief of sinners. And it is not only sufficient for the most unworthy to show them mercy and bestow some good upon them, but to bestow the greatest good, yea, to sufficient to bestow all good upon them and to do all things for them.

There is no benefit or blessing that they can receive so great, but the grace of Christ is sufficient to bestow it on the greatest sinner that ever lived. And not only so, but so great is his grace that nothing is too much as the means of this good. Tis sufficient not only to do great things, but also to suffer in order to it.

And not only to suffer, but to suffer most extremely, even unto death, the most terrible of natural evils. And not only death, but the most ignominious and tormenting and every way the most terrible death that men could inflict, yea, and greater sufferings than men could inflict who could only torment the body, but also those sufferings in his soul that were the more immediate fruits of the wrath of God against the sins of those he undertakes for. Second, there do meet in the person of Christ such really diverse excellencies

which otherwise would have been thought utterly incompatible in the same subject, such as are conjoined in no other person whatever, either divine, human, or angelical, and such as neither men nor angels would ever have imagined could have met together in the same person had it not been seen in the person of Christ.

I would give some instances. One, in the person of Christ do meet together infinite glory and lowest humility. Infinite glory and the virtue of humility meet in no other person but Christ.

They meet in no created person, for no created person has infinite glory, and they meet in no other divine person but Christ. For though the divine nature be infinitely abhorrent to pride, yet humility is not properly predicable of God the Father and the Holy Ghost that exist only in the divine nature, because it is a proper excellency only of a created nature, for it consists radically in a sense of a comparative lowness and littleness before God, or the great distance between God and the subject of his virtue. But it would be a contradiction to suppose any such thing in God.

But in Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, these two diverse excellencies are sweetly united. He is a person infinitely exalted in glory and dignity. Philippians chapter 2 verse 6, being in the form of God he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

There is equal honor due to him with the Father. John chapter 5 verse 23, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. God himself says to him, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.

Hebrews chapter 1 verse 8, and there is the same supreme respect and divine worship paid to him by the angels of heaven as to God the Father as there. Verse 6, let all the angels of God worship him. But however he is thus above all, yet he is lowest of all in humility.

There never was so great an instance of this virtue among either men or angels as Jesus. None ever was so sensible of the distance between God and him, or had a heart so lowly before God as the man Christ Jesus. Matthew chapter 11 verse 29, what a wonderful spirit of humility appeared in him when he was here upon earth in all his behavior, in his contentment, in his mean outward condition, contentedly living in the family of Joseph the carpenter, and marry his mother for thirty years together, and afterwards choosing outward meanness, poverty, and contempt rather than earthly greatness, in his washing his disciples' feet, and in all his speeches and deportment towards them, in his cheerfully sustaining the form of a servant through his whole life, and submitting to such immense humiliation at death.

Two, in the person of Christ do meet together infinite majesty and transcendent meekness. These again are two qualifications that meet together in no other person but Christ. Meekness, properly so-called, is a virtue proper only to the creature.

We scarcely ever find meekness mentioned as a divine attribute in Scripture, at least not in the New Testament, for thereby seems to be signified a calmness and quietness of spirit arising from humility in mutable beings that are naturally liable to be put in a ruffle by the assault of a tempestuous and injurious world. But Christ, being both God and man, hath both infinite majesty and superlative meekness. Christ was a person of infinite majesty.

It is he that is spoken of. Psalm 45.3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, in thy glory and thy majesty. Tis he that is mighty, that rideth on the heavens, and in his excellency on the sky.

Tis he that is terrible out of his holy places, who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea, before whom a fire goeth and burneth up his enemies round about, at whose presence the earth doth quake, and the hills do melt, who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, who rebukes the sea, and maketh it dry, and dryeth up the rivers, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, from whose presence, and from the glory of whose power, the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, that hath heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, and is the high and lofty one, who inhabits eternity, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of whose dominion there is no end. And yet he was the most marvellous instance of meekness, and humble quietness of spirit, that ever was, agreeable to the prophecies of him. Matthew chapter 21, verses 4 and 5. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

And agreeable to what Christ declares of himself, Matthew chapter 21, verse 29, I am meek and lowly of heart. And agreeable to what was manifest in his behaviour here in this world. For there never was such an instance seen on earth, of a meek behaviour, under injuries and reproaches and toward enemies, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, who was of a wonderful spirit of forgiveness, was ready to forgive his worst enemies, and prayed for them with fervent and effectual prayers.

With what meekness did he appear, when in the ring of soldiers that were condemning and mocking him, when he was silent, and opened not his mouth, but went as a lamb to the slaughter? Thus is Christ a lion in majesty, and a lamb in meekness. 3. There meet, in the person of Christ, the deepest reverence toward God, and equality with God. Christ, when he was here on earth, appeared full of holy reverence towards the Father.

He paid the most reverential worship to him, praying to him with postures of reverence. Thus we read of his kneeling down and praying, Luke chapter 22, verse 41. This became Christ as he was one that had taken on him the human nature.

But at the same time he existed in the divine nature, whereby his person was in all respects equal to the person of the Father. God the Father hath no attribute or perfection that the Son hath not, in equal degree and equal glory. These things meet in no other person but Jesus Christ.

4. There are conjoined, in the person of Christ, infinite worthiness of good, and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil. He was perfectly innocent, and deserved no suffering. He deserved nothing from God by any guilt of his own, and he deserved no ill from men, yea? He was not only harmless and undeserving of suffering, but he was infinitely worthy, worthy of the infinite love of the Father, worthy of infinite and eternal happiness, and infinitely worthy of all possible esteem, love, and service from all men.

And yet, he was perfectly patient under the greatest sufferings that ever were endured in this world. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 15. After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

He suffered not from his Father for his faults, but ours. And he suffered from men not for his faults, but for those things on account of which he was infinitely worthy of their love and honor, which made his patience the more wonderful and the more glorious. 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 20-24.

For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called,

because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed.

There is no such conjunction of innocence, worthiness, and patience under sufferings as in the person of Christ. 5. In the person of Christ are conjoined an exceeding spirit of obedience with supreme dominion over heaven and earth. Christ is the Lord of all things in two respects.

He is so, as he is God-man and mediator. And so his dominion is appointed and given of the Father, and is by delegation from God, and he is, as it were, the Father's vicegerent. But he is the Lord of all things in another respect, that is, as he is, by his original nature, God.

And so he is, by natural right, the Lord of all, and supreme over all, as much as the Father. Thus he has dominion over the world, not by delegation, but in his own right. He is not an under-God, as the Arians suppose, but to all intents and purposes, supreme God.

And yet, in the same person is found the greatest spirit of obedience to the commands and law of God that ever was in the universe, which was manifest in his obedience here in this world. John 14.31. As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. John 15.10. Even as I have commanded kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

The greatness of his spirit of obedience appears in the perfection of his obedience, and in his obeying commands of such exceeding difficulty. Never anyone received commands from God of such difficulty, and that were so great a trial of obedience as Jesus Christ. One of God's commands to him was that he should yield himself to those dreadful sufferings that he underwent.

See John 10.18. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. This commandment received I of my Father. And Christ was thoroughly obedient to this command of God.

Hebrews 5.8. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered. Philippians 2.8. He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Never was there such an instance of obedience in man nor angel as this, though he that obeyed was at the same time supreme Lord of both angels and men.

6. In the person of Christ are conjoined absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation. This is another unparalleled conjunction. Christ, as he is God, is the absolute sovereign of the world.

He is the sovereign disposer of all events. The decrees of God are all his sovereign decrees, and the work of creation and all God's works of providence are his sovereign works. Tis he that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

Colossians 1.16.17. By him, and through him, and to him are all things. John 5.17. The Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Matthew 8.3. I will, be thou clean.

But yet I will not. Christ was the most wonderful instance of resignation that ever appeared in the world. He was absolutely and perfectly resigned when he had a near and immediate prospect of his terrible

sufferings, and the dreadful cup that he was to drink, the idea and expectation of which made his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and put him into such an agony, that his sweat was, as it were, great drops or clots of blood, falling down to the ground.

But in such circumstances he was wholly resigned to the will of God. Matthew chapter 26 verse 39. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Verse 42. O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. 7. In Christ do meet together self-sufficiency and an entire trust and reliance on God, which is another conjunction peculiar to the person of Christ.

As he is a divine person, he is self-sufficient, standing in need of nothing. All creatures are dependent on him, but he is dependent on none, but is absolutely independent. His proceeding from the Father in his eternal generation or affiliation argues no proper dependence on the will of the Father, for that proceeding was natural and necessary, and not arbitrary.

But yet Christ entirely trusted in God. His enemies say that of him. He trusted in God that he would deliver him.

Matthew chapter 27 verse 43. And the apostle testifies, first Peter chapter 2 verse 23, that he committed himself to God. Third, such diverse excellencies are expressed in him towards men that otherwise would have seemed impossible to be exercised toward the same object as particularly these three--justice, mercy, and truth.

The same that are mentioned, Psalm 85.10, mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The strict justice of God, and even his revenging justice, and that against the sins of men, was never so gloriously manifested as in Christ. He manifested an infinite regard to the attribute of God's justice, in that when he had a mind to save sinners, he was willing to undergo such extreme sufferings rather than that their salvation should be to the injury of the honor of that attribute.

And, as he is the judge of the world, he doth himself exercise strict justice. He will not clear the guilty, nor at all acquit the wicked in judgment. And yet, how wonderfully is infinite mercy towards sinners displayed in him! And what glorious and ineffable grace and love have been, and are exercised by him towards sinful men! Though he be the just judge of a sinful world, yet he is also the Savior of the world.

Though he be a consuming fire to sin, yet he is the light and life of sinners. Romans 3.25,26 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. So the immutable truth of God, in the threatenings of his law against the sins of men, was never so manifested as it is in Jesus Christ.

For there never was any other so great a trial of the unalterableness of the truth of God in those threatenings as when sin came to be imputed to his own Son. And then in Christ has been seen already an actual complete accomplishment of those threatenings, which never has been nor will be seen in any other instance, because the eternity that will be taken up in fulfilling those threatenings on others never will be finished. Christ manifested an infinite regard to this truth of God in his sufferings, and in his judging the world he makes the covenant of works that contains those dreadful threatenings his rule of judgment.

He will see to it that it is not infringed in the least jot or tittle. He will do nothing contrary to the threatenings of the law and their complete fulfillment. And yet in him we have many great and precious promises, promises of perfect deliverance from the penalty of the law.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. And in him are all the promises of God, yea, and amen. Having thus shown wherein there is an admirable conjunction of excellencies in Christ, I now proceed.

Secondly, to show how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts. First, it appears in what Christ did in taking on our nature. In this act his infinite condescension wonderfully appeared, that he that was God should become man, that the word should be made flesh, and should take on him a nature infinite below his original nature.

And it appears yet more remarkably in the low circumstances of his incarnation. He was conceived in the womb of a poor young woman, whose poverty appeared in that when she came to offer sacrifices of her purification, she brought what was allowed in the law only in case of poverty, as Luke chapter 2 verse 24, according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. This was allowed only in case the person was so poor that she was not able to offer a lamb.

Leviticus chapter 12 verse 8. And though his infinite condescension thus appeared in the manner of his incarnation, yet his divine dignity also appeared in it. For though he was conceived in the womb of a poor virgin, yet he was there conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. And his divine dignity also appeared in the holiness of his conception and birth.

Though he was conceived in the womb of one of the corrupt race of mankind, yet he was conceived and born without sin. As the angel said to the blessed virgin, Luke chapter 1 verse 35, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

His infinite condescension marvelously appeared in the manner of his birth. He was brought forth in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn. The inn was taken up by others that were looked upon as persons of greater account.

The blessed virgin, being poor and despised, was turned or shut out. Though she was in necessitous circumstances, yet those that counted themselves her betters would not give place to her, and therefore in the time of her travail she was forced to betake herself to a stable. And when the child was born, it was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, and there Christ lay a little infant, and there he eminently appeared as a lamb.

But yet this feeble infant that was born thus in a stable, and laid in a manger, was born to conquer and triumph over Satan, that roaring lion. He came to subdue the mighty powers of darkness, and make a show of them openly, and so to restore peace on earth, and to manifest God's good will towards men, and to bring glory to God in the highest, according as the end of his birth was declared by the joyful songs of the glorious hosts of angels, appearing to the shepherds at the same time that the infant lay in the manger, whereby his divine dignity was manifested. Second, this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in the acts and various passages of Christ's life.

Though Christ dwelt on the earth in mean outward circumstances, whereby his condescension and humility especially appeared, and his majesty was veiled, yet his divine dignity and glory did in many of his acts shine through the veil, and it illustriously appeared that he was not only the Son of Man, but the great God. Thus, in the circumstances of his infancy, his outward meanness appeared, yet there was something then to show forth his divine dignity, in the wise men's being stirred up to come from the east to give honor to him. They are being led by a miraculous star, and coming and falling down and worshiping him, and presenting him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

His humility and meekness wonderfully appeared in his subjection to his mother and reputed father when he was a child. He herein appeared as a lamb. But his divine glory broke forth and shone when, at twelve years old, he disputed with the doctors in the temple, in that he appeared, in some measure, as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

And so, after he entered on his public ministry, his marvelous humility and meekness was manifested in his choosing to appear in such mean outward circumstances, and in being so contented in them when he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and depended on the charity of some of his followers for his subsistence, as appears by Luke 8 at the beginning. As also in his meek condescending and familiar treatment of his disciples, in his discourses with them, treating them as a father his children, yea, as friends and companions, and in his patient bearing such affliction and reproach, and so many injuries from the scribes and Pharisees and others, in these things he appeared as a lamb. And yet he at the same time did many ways show forth his divine majesty and glory, particularly in the miracles that he wrought, which were evidently divine works, and manifested omnipotent power, and so declared him to be the lion of the tribe of Judah.

His wonderful and miraculous works plainly showed him to be the God of nature, in that it appeared by them that he had all nature in his hands, and could lay an arrest upon it, and stop and change its course as he pleased, in healing the sick, and opening the eyes of the blind, and unstopping the ears of the deaf, and healing the lame, he showed that he was the God that framed the eye, and created the air, and was the author of the frame of man's body. By the dead's rising at his command, it appeared that he was the author and fountain of life, and that God the Lord to whom belong the issues from death. By his walking on the sea in a storm, when the waves were raised, he showed himself to be that God spoken of in Job 9.8, that treaded on the waves of the sea.

By his stilling the storm, and calming the rage of the sea, by his powerful command saying, Peace, be still, he showed himself to be he that has the command of the universe, and to be that God that brings things to pass by the word of his power, that speaks, and is done, that commands, and it stands fast, and he that is spoken of, Psalm 65, 7, who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and Psalm 107, verse 29, that maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still, and Psalm 89, 8 and 9. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rebukest the raging of the sea, when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Christ, by casting out devils, remarkably appeared as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and showed that he was stronger than the roaring lion that seeks whom he may devour. He commanded them to come out, and they were forced to obey.

They were terribly afraid of him. They fall down before him and beseech him not to torment them. He forces a whole legion of them to forsake their old hold by his powerful word, and they could not so much as enter into the swine without his leave.

He showed the glory of his omniscience by telling the thoughts of men. As we have often an account, herein he appeared to be that God spoken of, Amos 4.13, that declareth unto man what is his thought. Thus, in the midst of his meanness and humiliation, his divine glory appeared in miracles, John 2, verse 11.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory. And though Christ ordinarily appeared without outward glory, and in great obscurity, yet at a certain time he threw off the veil and appeared in his divine majesty, so far as it could be outwardly manifested to men in this frail state, when he was transfigured in the mount. The apostle Peter speaks of it, 2 Peter 1, verses 16 and 17, speaking there of himself as one that was an eyewitness of his majesty, when he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him, from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, which voice that came from heaven they heard, when they were with him in the holy mount.

And at the same time that Christ was wont to appear in such meekness, condescension, and humility, in his familiar discourses with his disciples, appearing therein as the Lamb of God, he was also wont to appear as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, with divine authority and majesty, in his so sharply rebuking the scribes and Pharisees, and other hypocrites. Third, this admirable conjunction of excellencies remarkably appears in his offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners in his last sufferings, as this was the greatest thing in all the work of redemption, the greatest act of Christ in that work. So in this act especially does there appear that admirable conjunction of excellencies that has been spoken of.

Christ never so much appeared as a lamb as when he was slain. He came like a lamb to the slaughter. Isaiah chapter 53 verse 7. Then he was offered up to God as a lamb without blemish, and without spot.

Then especially did he appear to be the antitype of the Lamb of the Passover. First Corinthians chapter 5 verse 7. Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. And yet in that act he did in an especial manner appear as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Yea, in this above all other acts in many respects as may appear in the following things. One, then was Christ in the greatest degree of his humiliation, and yet by that above all things his divine glory appears. Christ's humiliation was great in being born in such a low condition of a poor virgin and in a stable.

His humiliation was great in being subject to Joseph the carpenter and Mary his mother, and afterward in living in poverty so as not to have where to lay his head, and in suffering such manifold and bitter reproaches as he suffered while he went about preaching and working miracles. But his humiliation was never so great as it was in his last sufferings, beginning with his agony in the garden till he expired on the cross. Never was he subject to such ignominy as then.

Never did he suffer so much pain in his body, or so much sorrow in his soul. Never was he in so great an exercise of his condescension, humility, meekness and patience as he was in these last sufferings. Never was his divine glory and majesty covered with so thick and dark a veil.

Never did he so empty himself and make himself of no reputation as at this same time, and yet never was his divine glory so manifested by any act of his as in that act of yielding himself up to these sufferings. When the fruit of it came to appear, and the mystery and ends of it to be unfolded in the issue of it, then did the glory of it appear. Then did it appear as the most glorious act of Christ that ever he exercised toward the creature.

This act of his is celebrated by the angels and hosts of heaven with peculiar praises as that which is above all others glorious, as you may see in the context. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us to our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.

2. He never in any act gave so great a manifestation of love to God, and yet never so manifested his love to those that were enemies to God as in that act. Christ never did anything whereby his love to the Father was so eminently manifested as in his laying down his life under such inexpressible sufferings, in obedience to his command, and for the vindication of the honor of his authority and majesty, nor did ever any mere creature give such a testimony of love to God as that was. And yet this was the greatest expression of all, of his love to sinful men that were enemies to God.

Romans 5.10. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. The greatness of Christ's love to such appears in nothing so much as in its being dying love. That blood of Christ that was sweat out and fell in great drops to the ground in his agony was shed from love to God's enemies and his own.

That shame and spitting, that torment of body, and that exceeding sorrow even unto death that he endured in his soul was what he underwent from love to rebels against God to save them from hell and to purchase for them eternal glory. Never did Christ so eminently show his regard to God's honor as in offering up himself a victim to revenging justice to vindicate God's honor, and yet in this above all he manifested his love to them that dishonored God so as to bring such guilt on themselves that nothing less than his blood could atone for it. Three, Christ never so eminently appeared for divine justice and yet never suffered so much from divine justice as when he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins.

In Christ's great sufferings did his infinite regard to the honor of God's justice distinguishingly appear, for it was from regard to that that he thus humbled himself, and yet in these sufferings Christ was the mark of the vindictive expressions of that very justice of God. Revenging justice then spent all its force upon him on the account of our guilt that was laid upon him. He was not spared at all, but God spent the arrows of his vengeance upon him, which made him sweat blood and cry out upon the cross, and probably rent his vitals, broke his heart, the fountain of blood, or some other internal blood vessels, and by the violent fermentation turned his blood to water.

For the blood and water that issued out of his side when pierced by the spear seems to have been extravasated blood, and so there might be a kind of literal fulfillment of that in Psalm 22.14, 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. And this was the way and means by which Christ stood up for the honor of God's justice, that is, by thus suffering its terrible executions. For when he had undertaken for sinners, and had substituted himself in their room, divine justice could have its due honor no other way than by his suffering its revenges.

In this the diverse excellencies that met in the person of Christ appeared, that is, his infinite regard to God's justice, and such love to those that have exposed themselves to it, as induced him thus to yield himself a sacrifice to it. For Christ's holiness never so illustriously shone forth as it did in his last sufferings,

and yet he never was to such a degree treated as guilty. Christ's holiness never had such a trial as it had then, and therefore never had so great a manifestation.

When it was tried in this furnace, it came forth as gold, or as silver purified seven times. His holiness then, above all, appeared in his steadfast pursuit of the honor of God, and in his obedience to Him. For his yielding himself unto death was transcendently the greatest act of obedience that ever was paid to God, by anyone since the foundation of the world, and yet then Christ was in the greatest degree treated as a wicked person.

He was apprehended and bound as a malefactor, his accusers represented him as a most wicked wretch. In his sufferings before his crucifixion he was treated as if he had been the worst and vilest of mankind, and then he was put to a kind of death that none but the worst sort of malefactors were wont to suffer, those that were most abject in their persons and guilty of the blackest crimes. And he suffered as though guilty from God himself, by reason of our guilt imputed to him, for he was made sin for us who knew no sin, he was made subject to wrath as if he had been sinful himself, he was made a curse for us.

Christ never so greatly manifested his hatred of sin as against God, as in his dying to take away the dishonor that sin had done to God, and yet never was he to such a degree subject to the terrible effects of God's hatred of sin and wrath against it as he was then. In this appears those diverse excellencies meeting in Christ, that is, love to God and grace to sinners. He never was so dealt with as unworthy as in his last sufferings, and yet it is chiefly on account of them that he is accounted worthy.

He was therein dealt with as if he had not been worthy to live. They cry out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! John 19.15. And they prefer Barabbas before him. And he suffered from the Father as one whose demerits were infinite by reason of our demerits that were laid upon him.

And yet it was especially by that act of his subjecting himself to those sufferings that he merited, and on the account of which chiefly he was accounted worthy, the glory of his exaltation. Philippians 2.8.9. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, wherefore God hath highly exalted him. And we see that it is on this account chiefly that he is extolled as worthy by saints and angels in the context.

Worthy, say they, is the Lamb that was slain. This shows an admirable conjunction in him of infinite dignity and infinite condescension and love to the infinitely unworthy. 6. Christ in his last sufferings suffered most extremely from those that he was than in his greatest act of love too.

He never suffered so much from his Father, though not from any hatred to him, but from hatred to our sins. For he then forsook him, as Christ on the cross expresses it, or took away the comforts of his presence, and then it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief, as Isaiah 53.10. And yet never gave so great a manifestation of love to God as then, as has been already observed. So Christ never suffered so much from the hands of men as he did then, and yet never was in so high an exercise of love to men.

He never was so ill-treated by his disciples, who were so unconcerned about his sufferings that they would not watch with him one hour in his agony. And when he was apprehended, all forsook him and fled, except Peter, who denied him with oaths and curses. And yet, when he was suffering, shedding his blood and pouring out his soul unto death for them.

Yea, he probably was then shedding his blood for some of them that shed his blood. He was dying for some that killed him, whom he prayed for, while they were crucifying him, and were probably afterwards

brought home to Christ by Peter's preaching. Compare Luke 23.34, Acts 2.23, 36, 37, 41, 3.17, 4.4. This shows an admirable meeting of justice and grace in the redemption of Christ.

7. It was in Christ's last sufferings, above all, that he was delivered up to the power of his enemies. And yet by these, above all, he obtained victory over his enemies. Christ never was so in his enemies' hands as in the time of his last sufferings.

They sought his life before, but from time to time they were restrained, and Christ escaped out of their hands, and this reason is given for it that his time was not yet come. But now they were suffered to work their will upon him. He was in great degree delivered up to the malice and cruelty of both wicked men and devils, and therefore when Christ's enemies came to apprehend him, he says to them, Luke 22.53, When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me.

But this is your hour and the power of darkness. Yet it was principally by means of those sufferings that he conquered and overthrew his enemies. Christ never so effectually bruised Satan's head as when he bruised his heel.

The weapon with which Christ warred against the devil and obtained a most complete victory and glorious triumph over him was the cross, the instrument and weapon with which he thought he had overthrown Christ and brought on him shameful destruction. Colossians 2.14 and 15, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, nailing it to his cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. In his last sufferings, Christ sapped the very foundations of Satan's kingdom.

He conquered his enemies in their own territories and beat them with their own weapons, as David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. The devil had, as it were, swallowed up Christ, as the whale did Jonah, but it was deadly poison to him. He gave him a mortal wound in his own bowels.

He was soon sick of his morsel and forced to vomit him up again, and is to this day heartsick of what he then swallowed as his prey. In those sufferings of Christ was laid the foundation of all that glorious victory that he has already obtained over Satan, in the overthrow of his heathenish kingdom, in the Roman Empire, and all the success the gospel has had since, and also of all his future and still more glorious victory that is to be obtained in all the earth. Thus Samson's riddle is most eminently fulfilled, Judges 14.14, out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

And thus the true Samson does more towards the destruction of his enemies at his death than in his life. In yielding up himself to death, he pulls down the temple of Dagon and destroys many thousands of his enemies, even while they are making themselves sport in his sufferings. And so he whose type was the ark pulls down Dagon and breaks off his head and hands in his own temple, even while he is brought in there as Dagon's captive.

Thus Christ appeared at the same time and in the same act as both a lion and a lamb. He appeared as a lamb in the hands of his cruel enemies, as a lamb in the paws and between the devouring jaws of a roaring lion. Yea, he was a lamb actually slain by this lion, and yet at the same time as the lion of the tribe of Judah, he conquers and triumphs over Satan, destroying his own devourer, as Samson did the lion that roared upon him when he rent him as he would a kid.

And in nothing has Christ appeared so much as a lion in glorious strength, destroying his enemies as when he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter in his greatest weakness, he was most strong, and when he suffered most from his enemies, he brought the greatest confusion on his enemies. Thus this admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies was manifest in Christ in his offering up himself to God in his last sufferings. Fourth, it is still manifest in his acts, in his present state of exaltation in heaven.

Indeed, in his exalted state he most eminently appears in a manifestation of those excellencies, on the account of which he is compared to a lion, but still appears as a lamb. Revelation 14.1 And I looked, and lo, a lion stood on Mount Zion. As in his state of humiliation he chiefly appeared as a lamb, and yet did not appear without manifestation of his divine majesty and power, as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

Though Christ be now at the right hand of God, exalted as King of heaven and Lord of the universe, yet as he still is in the human nature, he still excels in humility. Though the man Christ Jesus be the highest of all creatures in heaven, yet he as much excels them all in humility as he doth in glory and dignity, for none sees so much of the distance between God and him as he does. And though he now appears in such glorious majesty and dominion in heaven, yet he appears as a lamb in his condescending, mild, and sweet treatment of his saints there.

For he is a lamb still, even amidst the throne of his exaltation, and he that is the shepherd of the whole flock is himself a lamb, and goes before them in heaven as such. Revelation 7.17 For the lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Though in heaven every knee bows to him, and though the angels fall down before him, adoring him, yet he treats his saints with infinite condescension, mildness, and endearment.

And in his acts towards the saints on the earth, he still appears as a lamb, manifesting exceeding love and tenderness in his intercession for them, as one that has had experience of affliction and temptation. He has not forgot what these things are, nor has he forgot how to pity those that are subject to them. And he still manifests his lamb-like excellencies in his dealings with his saints on earth, in admirable forbearance, love, gentleness, and compassion, instructing, supplying, supporting, and comforting them, often coming to them and manifesting himself to them by his Spirit, that he may sup with them, and they with him, admitting them to sweet communion with him, enabling them with boldness and confidence to come to him, and soulless their hearts in him.

And in heaven Christ still appears, as it were with the marks of his wounds upon him, and so appears as a lamb as it had been slain, as he was represented in vision to St. John in the text, when he appeared to open the book sealed with seven seals, which is part of the glory of his exaltation. Fifth and lastly, this admirable conjunction of excellencies will be manifest in Christ's acts at the last judgment. He then, above all other times, will appear as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, in infinite greatness and majesty, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels, and the earth shall tremble before him, and the hills shall melt.

This is he spoken of, Revelation chapter 20, verse 11, that shall sit on a great white throne, before whose face the earth and heaven shall flee away. He will then appear in the most dreadful and amazing manner to the wicked. The devils tremble at the thoughts of that appearance, and when it shall be, the kings and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and the mighty men and every bondman and every freeman shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall cry to the

mountains and rocks to fall on them, to hide them from the face and wrath of the Lamb.

And none can declare or conceive of the amazing manifestations of wrath in which he will then appear towards these, or the trembling and astonishment, the shrieking and gnashing of teeth, with which they shall stand before his judgment seat and receive the terrible sentence of his wrath. And yet he will at the same time appear as a lamb to his saints. He will receive them as friends and brethren, treating them with infinite mildness and love.

There shall be nothing in him terrible to them, but towards them he will clothe himself wholly with sweetness and endearment. The church shall then be admitted to him as his bride. That shall be her wedding day.

The saints shall all be sweetly invited to come with him, to inherit the kingdom, and reign in it with him to all eternity. Application 1. From this doctrine we may learn one reason why Christ is called by such a variety of names, and held forth under such a variety of representations in Scripture. 'Tis the better to signify and exhibit to us that variety of excellencies that meet together and are conjoined in him.

Many appellations are mentioned together in one verse, Isaiah 9, 6, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. It shows a wonderful conjunction of excellencies, that the same person should be a son born and given, and yet be the Everlasting Father, without beginning or end, that he should be a child, and yet be he whose name is Counselor, and the Mighty God, and well may his name, in whom such things are conjoined, be called Wonderful. By reason of the same wonderful conjunction, Christ is represented by a great variety of sensible things, that are on some account excellent.

Thus in some places he is called a son, as Malachi 4.2, in others a star, Numbers 24.17, and he is especially represented by the morning star, as being that which excels all other stars in brightness, and is the forerunner of the day, Revelation 22.16. And, as in our text, he is compared to a lion, in one verse, and a lamb in the next. So sometimes he is compared to a roe, or a young hart, another creature most diverse from a lion. So in some places he is called a rock, in others he is compared to a pearl, in some places he is called a man of war, and the captain of our salvation, in other places he is represented as a bridegroom.

In the second chapter of Catechles, the first verse, he is compared to a rose and a lily, that are sweet and beautiful flowers. In the next verse but one, he is compared to a tree bearing sweet fruit. In Isaiah 53.2, he is called a root out of a dry ground, but elsewhere, instead of that, he is called the tree of life, that grows, not in a dry or barren ground, but in the midst of the paradise of God, Revelation 2.7. 2. Let the consideration of this wonderful meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ induce you to accept of Him and close with Him as your Savior.

As all manner of excellencies meet in Him, so there are concurring in Him all manner of arguments and motives to move you to choose Him for your Savior, and everything that tends to encourage poor sinners to come and put their trust in Him, His fullness and all sufficiency as a Savior, gloriously appears in that variety of excellencies that has been spoken of. Fallen man is in a state of exceeding great misery, and is helpless in it. He is a poor weak creature, like an infant cast out in its blood, in the day that it is born.

But Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is strong, though we are weak. He hath prevailed to do that for us, which no creature else could do.

Fallen man is a mean, despicable creature, a contemptible worm, but Christ, who has undertaken for us, is infinitely honorable and worthy. Fallen man is polluted, but Christ is infinitely holy. Fallen man is hateful, but Christ is infinitely lovely.

Fallen man is the object of God's indignation, but Christ is infinitely dear to Him. We have dreadfully provoked God, but Christ has performed that righteousness that is infinitely precious in God's eyes. There is not only infinite strength and infinite worthiness, but infinite condescension and love and mercy, as great as power and dignity.

If you are a poor, distressed sinner, whose heart is ready to sink for fear that God will never have mercy upon you, you need not be afraid to go to Christ for fear that He is either unable or unwilling to help you. Here is a strong foundation and an inexhaustible treasure to answer the necessities of your poor soul, and here is infinite grace and gentleness to invite and embolden a poor, unworthy, fearful soul to come to it. If Christ accepts of you, you need not fear but that you will be safe, for He is a strong lion for your defense.

And if you come, you need not fear but that you shall be accepted, for He is like a lamb to all that come to Him, and receives them with infinite grace and tenderness. 'Tis true, He has awful majesty, but is the great God and is infinitely high above you. But there is this to encourage and embolden the poor sinner that Christ is man as well as God, He is a creature as well as the Creator, and is the most humble and lowly in heart of any creature in heaven or earth.

This may well make the poor, unworthy creature bold in coming to Him. You need not hesitate one moment, but may run to Him and cast yourself upon Him. You will certainly be graciously and meekly received by Him.

Though He be a lion, He will only be a lion to your enemies, but He will be a lamb to you. It could not have been conceived had it not been so in the person of Christ that there could have been so much in any Savior that is inviting and tender to encourage sinners to trust in Him. Whatever your circumstances are, you need not be afraid to come to such a Savior as this.

Be you never so wicked a creature. Here is worthiness enough. Be you never so poor and mean and ignorant a creature.

There is no danger of being despised, for though He be so much greater than you, He is also immensely more humble than you. Any one of you that is a father or mother won't despise one of your own children that comes to you in distress. Much less danger is there of Christ's despising you if you in your heart come to Him.

Here let me little expostulate with the poor, burdened, distressed soul. First, what are you afraid of, that you dare not venture your soul upon Christ? Are you afraid that He can't save you, that He is not strong enough to conquer the enemies of your soul? But how can you desire one stronger than the mighty God, as Christ is called in Isaiah 9.6? Is there need of greater than infinite strength? Are you afraid that He won't be willing to stoop so low as to take any gracious notice of you? But then look on Him as He stood in the ring of soldiers, exposing His blessed face to be buffeted and spit upon by them. Behold Him bound with His back uncovered to those that smote Him, and behold Him hanging on the cross.

Do you think that He that had condescension enough to stoop to these things, and that for His crucifiers, will be unwilling to accept of you if you come to Him? Or are you afraid that if He does accept you, that God the Father won't accept of Him for you? But consider, will God reject His own Son, in whom His infinite delight is, and has been from all eternity, and that is so united to Him, that if He should reject Him, He would reject Himself? Second, what is there that you can desire should be in a Savior that is not in Christ?

Or wherein should you desire a Savior that should be otherwise than Christ is? What excellency is there wanting? What is there that is great or good? What is there that is venerable or winning? What is there that is adorable or endearing? Or what can you think of that would be encouraging that is not to be found in the person of Christ? Would you have your Savior to be great and honorable because you are not willing to be beholden to a mean person? And is not Christ a person honorable enough to be worthy that you should be dependent on Him?

Is He not a person high enough to be worthy to be appointed to so honorable a work as your salvation? Would you not only have a Savior that is of high degree, but would you have Him, notwithstanding His exaltation and dignity, to be made also of low degree, that He might have experience of afflictions and trials, that He might learn by the things that He has suffered to pity them that suffer and are tempted? And has not Christ been made low enough for you, and has He not suffered enough?

Would you not only have Him have experience of the afflictions you now suffer, but also of that amazing wrath that you fear hereafter, that He may know how to pity those that are in danger of it and afraid of it? This Christ has had experience of, which experience gave Him a greater sense of it a thousand times than you have or any man living has. Would you have your Savior to be one that is near to God, that so His meditation might be prevalent with Him? And can you desire Him to be nearer to God than Christ is, who is His only begotten Son of the same essence with the Father?

And would you not only have Him near to God, but also near to you, that you may have free access to Him? And would you have Him nearer to you than to be in the same nature, not only so, but united to you by a spiritual union, so close as to be fitly represented by the union of the wife to the husband, of a branch to the vine, of the member to the head, yea, so as to be one and called one Spirit? For so He will be united to you if you accept of Him. Would you have a Savior that is given some great and extraordinary testimony of mercy and love to sinners by something that He has done, as well as by what He says?

And can you think or conceive of greater things than Christ has done? Was it not a great thing for Him, who was God, to take upon Him human nature, to be not only God, but man, thenceforward to all eternity? But would you look upon suffering for sinners to be a yet greater testimony of love to sinners than merely doing, though it be never so extraordinary a thing that He has done? And would you desire that a Savior should suffer more than Christ has suffered for sinners? What is their wanting, or what would you add, if you could, to make Him more fit to be your Savior? But further, to induce you to accept of Christ as your Savior, consider two things particularly.

One, how much Christ appears as the Lamb of God in His invitations to you to come to Him and trust in Him? With what sweet peace and kindness does He from time to time call and invite you? As Proverbs 8, 4, Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. And Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 1 through 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.

How gracious is He here in inviting every one that thirsts, and in so repeating His invitation over and over, Come ye to the waters, come, buy and eat. Yea, come, and in declaring the excellency of that entertainment which He invites you to accept of, Come, buy wine and milk, and in assuring you that your poverty, and having nothing to pay for it, shall be no objection. Come, ye that hath no money, come without money and without price.

And in the gracious arguments and expostulations that He uses with you, as it follows, Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. As much as to say, Tis altogether needless for you to continue laboring and toiling for that which can never serve your turn, seeking rest in the world and in your own righteousness. I have made abundant provision for you, of that which is really good, and will fully satisfy your desires, and answer your end, and stand ready to accept of you.

You need not be afraid. If you will come to Me, I will engage to see all your wants supplied, and you made an happy creature. As He promises in the third verse incline your ear, and come unto Me, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

And so, Proverbs 9, at the beginning, how gracious and sweet is the invitation there! Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. Let you be never so poor, ignorant, and blind a creature. You shall be welcome.

And in the following words Christ sets forth the provision that He has made for you. Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. You are in a poor, famishing state, and have nothing wherewith to feed your perishing soul.

You have been seeking something, but yet remain destitute. Hearken, how Christ calls you to eat of His bread, and to drink of the wine that He hath mingled. And how much like a lamb does Christ appear in Matthew 11.28-30. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. O thou poor, distressed soul, whoever thou art, that art afraid that you never shall be saved, consider that this that Christ mentions is your very case when He calls to them that labour and are heavy laden.

And how He repeatedly promises you rest, if you come to Him. In the twenty-eighth verse He says, I will give you rest. And in the twenty-ninth verse, you shall find rest to your souls.

This is what you want. This is the thing you have been so long in vain seeking after. O how sweet would rest be to you, if you could but obtain it.

Come to Christ, and you shall obtain it. And hear how Christ, to encourage you, represents Himself as a Lamb. He tells you that He is meek and lowly in heart.

And are you afraid to come to such an one? And again, 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 I will sup with him, and he with Me. Christ condescends not only to call you to Him, but He comes to you, He comes to your door, and there knocks.

He might send an officer and seize you as a rebel and a vile malefactor, but instead of that, He comes and knocks at your door, and seeks that you would receive Him into your house as your friend and Saviour. And He not only knocks at your door, but He stands there waiting while you are backward and unwilling. And not only so, but He makes promises what He will do for you.

If you will admit Him, what privileges He will admit to you, He will sup with you, and you with Him. And again, Revelation 22.16,17, I am the root, and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him come, take of the water of life freely.

How does Christ here graciously set before you His own winning, attractive excellency? And how does He condescend to declare to you not only His own invitation, but the invitation of the Spirit and the Bride, if by any means He might encourage you to come? And how does He invite everyone that will, that they may take of the waters of life freely, that they may take it a free gift, however precious it be, and though it be the water of life? 2. If you do come to Christ, He will appear as a lion in His glorious power and dominion to defend you. All those excellencies of His in which He appears as a lion shall be yours, and shall be employed for you in your defense, for your safety, and to promote your glory. He will be as a lion to fight against your enemies.

He that touches you or offends you will provoke His wrath, as He that stirs up a lion. Unless your enemies can conquer this lion, they shall not be able to destroy or hurt you. Unless they are stronger than He, they shall not be able to hinder your happiness.

Isaiah 31.4 For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, like as the lion, and the young lion, roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him. He will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them. So shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

3. Let what has been said be improved to induce you to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and choose Him for your friend and portion. As there is such an admirable meeting of diverse excellencies in Christ, so there is everything in Him to render Him worthy of your love and choice, and to win and engage it. Whatsoever there is, or can be, that is desirable to be in a friend is in Christ, and that to the highest degree that can be desired.

Would you choose a friend that is a person of great dignity? It is a thing taking with men to have those for their friends that are much above them, because they look upon themselves honored by the friendship as such. Thus how taking would it be with an inferior maid to be the object of the dear love of some great and excellent prince? But Christ is infinitely above you and above all the princes of the earth, for He is the King of kings. So honorable a person as this offers Himself to you in the nearest and dearest friendship.

And would you choose to have a friend not only great but good? In Christ infinite greatness and infinite goodness meet together and receive luster and glory one from another. His greatness is rendered lovely by His goodness. The greater any one is without goodness, so much the greater evil.

But when infinite goodness is joined with greatness, it renders it a glorious and adorable greatness. So on the other hand, His infinite goodness receives luster from His greatness. He that is of great understanding and ability, and is with all of a good and excellent disposition, is deservedly more esteemed than a lower and lesser being, with the same kind inclination and good will.

Indeed, goodness is excellent in whatever subject it be found. It is beauty and excellency itself, and renders all excellent that are possessed of it, and yet more excellent when joined with greatness, as the very same excellent qualities of gold do render the body in which they are inherent more precious and of greater value when joined with greater than when with lesser dimensions. And how glorious is the sight to see Him who is the great Creator and Supreme Lord of heaven and earth, full of condescension and tender pity and mercy towards the mean and unworthy! His almighty power and infinite majesty and self-sufficiency render His exceeding love and grace the more surprising! And how do His condescension and compassions endear His majesty, power and dominion, and render those attributes pleasant that would otherwise be only terrible! Would you not desire that your friend, though great and honorable, should be of such condescension and grace, and so to have the way opened to free access to Him that His exaltation above you might not hinder your free enjoyment of His friendship? And would you choose not only that the infinite greatness and majesty of your friend should be, as it were, mollified and sweetened with condescension and grace, but would you also desire to have your friend in your own nature, that he might be brought nearer to you? Would you choose a friend far above you, and yet, as it were, upon a level with you, too? Though it be taking with men to have a near and dear friend of superior dignity, yet there is also an inclination in them to have their friend a sharer with them in circumstances.

Thus is Christ, though He be the great God, yet He has, as it were, brought Himself down to be upon a level with you, so as to become man as you are, that He might not only be your Lord, but your brother, and that He might be the more fit to be a companion for such a worm of the dust. This is one end of Christ's taking upon Him man's nature, that His people might be under advantages for a more familiar converse with Him than the infinite distance of divine nature would allow of. And upon this account the church longed for Christ's incarnation.

Canticles 8 verse 1 O thou that wert my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother, when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee, yea, I should not be despised. One design of God in the gospel is to bring us to make God the object of our undivided respect, that He may engross our regard every way, that whatever natural inclination there is in our souls, He may be the center of it, that God may be all in all. But there is an inclination in the creature not only to the adoration of a Lord and Sovereign, but to complacency in someone as a friend, to love and delight in someone that may be conversed with as a companion.

And virtue and holiness don't destroy or weaken this inclination of our nature. But so hath God contrived in the affair of our redemption, that a divine person may be the object even of this inclination of our nature. And in order hereto such an one is come down to us, and has taken our nature, and is become one of us, and calls himself our friend, brother, and companion.

Psalms 122 verse 8 For my brethren and companions sake I will now say, Peace be within thee. But is it not enough, in order to invite and encourage you to free access to a friend so great and high, that he is one of infinite condescending grace, and also has taken your own nature, and is become man? But would you further to embolden and win you, have him a man of wonderful meekness and humility? Why such an one is Christ! He is not only become man for you, but far the meekest and most humble of all men, the greatest instance of these sweet virtues that ever was or will be. Besides these, he has all other human excellencies in the highest perfection.

These indeed are no proper addition to his divine excellencies. Christ has no more excellency in his person since his incarnation than he had before, for divine excellency is infinite and can't be added to, yet

his human excellencies are additional manifestations of his glory and excellency to us, and are additional recommendations of him to our esteem and love, who are of finite comprehension. Though his human excellencies are but communications and reflections of his divine, and though this light, as reflected, falls infinitely short of the divine fountain of light in its immediate glory, yet the reflection shines, not without its proper advantages, as presented to our view and affection.

As the glory of Christ appears in the qualifications of his human nature, it appears to us in excellencies that are of our own kind, and are exercised in our own way and manner, and so, in some respects, are peculiarly fitted to invite our acquaintance and draw our affection. The glory of Christ as it appears in his divinity, though it be far brighter, yet doth it also more dazzles our eyes and exceeds the strength or comprehension of our sight. But, as it shines in the human excellencies of Christ, it is brought more to a level with our conceptions and suitableness to our nature and manner, yet retaining a semblance of the same divine beauty and a savour of the same divine sweetness.

But, as both divine and human excellencies meet together in Christ, they set off and recommend each other to us. It is what tends to endear the divine and infinite majesty and holiness of Christ to us, that these are attributes of a person that is in our nature, that is one of us, that has become our brother, and is the meekest and humblest of men. It encourages us to look upon these divine perfections, however high and great, yet as what we have some near concern in, and more of a right to, and liberty freely to enjoy.

And, on the other hand, how much more glorious and surprising do the meekness, the humility, obedience, and resignation, and other human excellencies of Christ appear when we consider that they are in so great a person as the eternal Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth. By your choosing Christ for your friend and portion, you will obtain these two infinite benefits. First, Christ will give Himself to you, with all those various excellencies that meet in Him, to your full and everlasting enjoyment.

He will ever after treat you as His dear friend, and you shall ere long be where He is, and shall behold His glory, and shall dwell with Him in most free and intimate communion and enjoyment. When the saints get to heaven, they shall not merely see Christ, and have to do with Him as subjects and servants with a glorious and gracious Lord and Sovereign, but Christ will entertain them as friends and brethren. This we may learn from the manner of Christ's conversing with His disciples here on earth.

Though He was their Sovereign Lord and did not refuse but require their supreme respect and adoration, yet He did not treat them as earthly sovereigns or want to do their subjects. He did not keep them at an awful distance, but all along conversed with them with the most friendly familiarity as a father amongst a company of children, yea, as with brethren. So He did with the twelve, and so He did with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

He told His disciples that He did not call them servants, but friends, and we read of one of them that leaned on His bosom. And doubtless He will not treat His disciples with less freedom and endearment in heaven. He won't keep them at a greater distance for His being in a state of exaltation, but He will rather take them into a state of exaltation with Him.

This will be the improvement Christ will make of His own glory, to make His beloved friends partakers with Him, to glorify them in His own glory, as He says to His Father, John 17, verses 22 and 23. And the glory which thou hast given Me have I given them, that they may be one, even as We are one, I in them, etc. We are to consider that though Christ is greatly exalted, yet He is exalted not as a private person for Himself only, but as His people's head, He is exalted in their name, and upon their account, as the

firstfruits, and as representing the whole harvest.

He is not exalted that He may be at a greater distance from them, but that they may be exalted with Him. The exaltation and honor of the head is not to make a greater distance between the head and the members, but the members have the same relation and union with the head they had before, and are honored with the head, and instead of the distance being greater, the union shall be nearer and more perfect. When believers get to heaven, Christ will conform them to Himself, as He is set down in His Father's throne, so they shall sit down with Him on His throne, and shall in their measure be made like Him.

When Christ was going to heaven, He comforted His disciples with that, that after a while He would come again and take them to Himself, that they might be with Him again. And we are not to suppose that when the disciples got to heaven they found Him keeping a greater distance than He used to do. No, doubtless, He embraced them as friends, and welcomed them to His and their Father's house, and to His and their glory.

They that had been His friends in this world, who had been together with Him here, and had together partook of sorrows and troubles, are now welcomed by Him to rest, and to partake of glory with Him. He took them and led them into His chambers, and showed them all His glory, as He prayed, John 17.24, Father, I will, that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me, that they may behold the glory which Thou hast given Me. And He led them to His living fountains of waters, and made them partake of His delights, as He prays, John 17.13, that My joy may be fulfilled in themselves.

And set them down with Him at His table in His kingdom, and made them partake with Him of His dainties, according to His promise, Luke 22.30, and led them into His banqueting house, and made them to drink new wine with Him in the kingdom of His heavenly Father, as He foretold them when He instituted the Lord's Supper, Matthew 26.29. Yea, the saints' conversation with Christ in heaven shall not only be as intimate and their access to Him as free as of the disciples on earth, but in many respects much more so. For in heaven that vital union shall be perfect, which is exceeding imperfect here. While the saints are in this world, there are great remains of sin and darkness to separate or disunite them from Christ, which shall then all be removed.

This is not a time for that full acquaintance and those glorious manifestations of love which Christ designs for His people hereafter, which seems to be signified by Christ's speech to Mary Magdalene. When ready to embrace Him when she met Him after His resurrection, John 20.17, Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father. When the saints shall see Christ's glory and exultation in heaven, it will indeed possess their hearts with the greater admiration and adoring respect, but will not all them into any separation, but will serve only to heighten their surprise and joy when they find Christ condescending to admit them to such intimate access, and so freely and fully communicating Himself to them.

So that if we choose Christ for our friend and portion, we shall hereafter be so received to Him that there shall be nothing to hinder the fullest enjoyment of Him, to the satisfying the utmost cravings of our souls. We may take our full swing at gratifying our spiritual appetite after these holy pleasures. Christ will then say, as in Canticles 5.1, Eat, O friends, drink ye, drink abundantly, O beloved.

And this shall be our entertainment to all eternity. There shall never be any end of this happiness, or anything to interrupt our enjoyment of it, or in the least to molest us in it. Second, by your being united to

Christ, you will have a more glorious union with and enjoyment of God the Father than otherwise could be.

For hereby the saints' relation to God becomes much nearer. They are the children of God in an higher manner than otherwise could be, for being members of God's own natural Son, they are, in a sort, partakers of His relation to the Father. They are not only sons of God by regeneration, but by a kind of communion in the sonship of the eternal Son.

This seems to be intended, Galatians 4.4-6, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. The church is the daughter of God, not only as He hath begotten her by His word and Spirit, but as she is the spouse of His eternal Son.

So we, being members of the Son, are partakers in our measure of the Father's love to the Son and complacency in Him. John 17.23 I in them, and thou in me. Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

26 That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them. 16.27 The Father himself loveth you, because ye loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. So we shall, according to our capacities, be partakers of the Son's enjoyment of God and have His joy fulfilled in ourselves.

John 17.13 And by this means we shall come to an immensely higher, more intimate and full enjoyment of God than otherwise could have been. For there is doubtless an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son, which is expressed by His being in the bosom of the Father. And saints being in Him shall, in their measure and manner, partake with Him in it, and of the blessedness of it.

And thus is the affair of our redemption ordered, that thereby we are brought to an immensely more exalted kind of union with God and enjoyment of Him, both the Father and the Son, than otherwise could have been. For Christ being united to the human nature, we have advantage for a more free and full enjoyment of Him than we could have had if He had remained only in the divine nature. So again, we, being united to a divine person as His members, can have a more intimate union and intercourse with God the Father, who is only in the divine nature than otherwise could be.

Christ, who is a divine person, by taking on Him our nature, descends from the infinite distance and height above us, and is brought nigh to us, whereby we have advantage for the full enjoyment of Him. And, on the other hand, we, by being in Christ, a divine person, do, as it were, ascend up to God through the infinite distance, and have hereby advantage for the full enjoyment of Him also. This was the design of Christ, to bring it to pass, that He and His Father and His people might all be united in one.

John 17, verses 21-23. That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee. That they also may be one in us.

That the world may believe that Thou hast sent me, and the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them. That they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and Thou in me. That they may be made perfect in one.

Christ has brought it to pass that those that the Father has given Him should be brought into the household of God, that He and His Father and His people should be, as it were, one society, one family, that the church should be, as it were, admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity. Amen.

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