

Wicked Men Inconsistent With Themselves

by Jonathan Edwards

Wicked men are inconsistent with themselves in their understandings, wills, and dispositions, leading to an inward war and making them their own worst enemies.

Scripture: Matthew 11:16, John 6:66, John 7:46, Titus 1:16, James 1:6

Topics: "Unbelief And Doubt", "Rejecting God's Message"

Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the inconsistency of wicked men with themselves, highlighting how their rejection of God's messengers, like John the Baptist and Christ, reveals their inconsistency in objections and lifestyle choices. He emphasizes that their unbelief, doubts, and secret sins hinder them from fully surrendering to God. Edwards compares their inconsistency to children in the markets, showing how their objections and behaviors do not align with their professed beliefs and hopes of eternal life in heaven.

Transcript

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(Dated December 1738)

Matthew 11:16-19.

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But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Subject: Wicked men are inconsistent with themselves.

THE occasion of this discourse was John's sending to Christ two of his disciples, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" When the messengers had gone back, Christ enters into a discourse with the multitude concerning John, of which the verses read are a part, in which Christ reproves the unreasonableness of the Jews in rejecting God's messengers. We may observe in the words the following things:

I. The messengers of God that are here instanced in that they had been rejected, viz. John the Baptist and Christ. The former is spoken of in the context as being on some accounts the greatest of all the prophets that ever came before Christ, as you may see, verses 9-11, "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The latter, even Christ, was the great prophet of God, the Head and Lord of the prophets, God's only-begotten Son.

II. In what the unreasonableness of their rejecting these messengers of God appears, viz. in their inconsistency with themselves in those objections which they made against them. And here we may observe,

First, the nature of their objections against these two messengers of God. They objected against their manner of living with respect to their meat and drink.

Second, the different manner of living of those two messengers of God. Christ came eating and drinking, but John came neither eating nor drinking, i.e. John lived on a very coarse and spare diet, as we read, Mat. 3:4, "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." He carefully abstained from that free use of pleasant meats and drinks that others allowed themselves in. But Christ came eating and drinking, i.e. freely using the comforts and enjoyments of life, taking indifferently all kinds of food or drink that were wholesome, comfortable, and lawful. This diverse manner of living of John the Baptist and Christ was agreeable to the diverse errands that they came upon. John's errand was to call men to repentance, to awaken them to a sense of their sin and misery, to bring them to mourn for their sins, and humble themselves before God for them, that they might be prepared for the comforts and blessings of the kingdom of heaven that were to be introduced by Jesus Christ. A life of abstinence from the pleasant things of this world was agreeable to the purpose of awakening the soul and of leading it to mourning and humiliation for sin, which it was especially John's business to preach and set an example of.

But after John had thus prepared the way with awakenings and repentance, then Christ came to administer comfort to those that were thus prepared for it, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort those that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Isa. 61:1-3. And freely eating and drinking, and enjoying the comforts and pleasant things of life, [were] agreeable to such an errand as this, and therefore Christ, in his first beginning of his public ministry which succeeded John's, declares this to be the business he was come upon. Luke 4:16-19, "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of

the prophet Esaias: and when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Third, their unreasonableness appears in the fact that though the way of living of these two persons was in this respect so diverse, yet they objected against both. John came neither eating nor drinking. And for that they objected against him, and reviled him, as though he was one that was very odd and strange, and beside himself, and under the influence of a diabolical spirit. This objection seemed to manifest a dislike of such a way of living, as though it was their opinion that a man ought not to live thus abstemiously, but should eat and drink freely as other people did. But yet when Christ came and did that, then they objected against that too, and bitterly reproached him for that, and called him a glutton, and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. So that there was no escaping their reproaches. If a man of God lived a life of trial and abstinence, they spoke of it as matter of great reproach, and yet if he did not so, they made that a matter of no less reproach. It was a crime with them for a prophet to eat and drink, and it was also a crime to let it alone. So inconsistent were they with themselves that there was not such thing as a prophet's suiting them. They condemned the doing of that which at the same time they condemned the not doing of, and both they condemned with great bitterness, and virulent and contemptuous reproaches. This plainly showed that their objections against John the Baptist and Christ were but vain pretenses, and that the true reason why they disliked them was not the manner of living of either of them with respect to eating and drinking, but because they hated their persons and the business they came upon. When men have a prejudice against other persons they will be ready to find fault with everything in them, they will find out bad names for their virtues, and will reproach those things in them which they will approve of and commend in others to whose persons they have a liking.

III. The thing to which Christ compares their inconsistency with themselves, to wit, to children who meet their companions in the streets or market-places, and endeavor to aid them in their play, in things of a diverse and contrary nature. For it they pipe unto them with notes manifesting cheerfulness and mirth, that does not suit them. They refuse to fall in with this, as though they did not like such cheerfulness, and as though mourning would suit them better. And then, when they see that they took a contrary course, they mourned with them, but yet neither do they fall in with that, they do not lament with the. So that they comfort them in nothing, neither mirth nor mourning.

So John the Baptist preaching repentance came with tokens of sorrow and mourning, and mean apparel, with a garment of camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, and with great abstinence. But Christ when he comes, comes eating and drinking with tokens of comfort and joy. But neither of them suited them. From the text thus explained we shall derive the following.

Doctrine. Wicked men are very inconsistent with themselves. They are so in the following respects:

- I. The dictates of their darkened understandings are inconsistent with themselves.
- II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason.
- III. Their wills are inconsistent with themselves.
- IV. Their outward show is inconsistent with their hearts.

V. Their profession is inconsistent with their practice.

VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hopes.

VII. Their practice is inconsistent with itself.

I. Their understandings are inconsistent with themselves. I do not mean that the faculty of reason and understanding is inconsistent with itself. For the faculty of understanding with which God has endowed man is wholly good and right. It is that wherein the natural image of God consists, and is the excellency of man's nature. And if the faculty of reason be duly improved, it will lead men right. Light is never inconsistent with itself. But the understandings of natural men are perverted and blinded by sin, and are inconsistent with themselves in two ways:

First, their practical judgment is inconsistent with their own reason. By their practical judgment, I mean that judgment which they make of things that prevail, so as to determine their actions and govern their practice. This in wicked men is in innumerable things contrary to their own reason. For, in forming their judgment of things by which they govern themselves, they do not inquire at the mouth of reason, but at the mouth of their inclinations. Their lusts have a far greater hand in the judgments that they make of things, and by which they govern themselves, than their reason. As for instance, their practical judgment is that the things of this fading world, the enjoyments of this short life, are things of greater importance than the things of the eternal world; and yet if they inquire at the mouth of their own reason, that tells them the contrary. Their reason tells them that it is most plain and evident that eternal things, things that are to last forever, are of vastly greater importance than the things of time.

So their reason tells them that it must needs be the part of wisdom and prudence to improve the present time with the utmost diligence and earnestness, and to make ready for death. And yet they are not convinced of it, but their governing opinion is, that it is best to neglect the business of religion for the present, and to enjoy their ease, and sloth, and lusts awhile longer.

Their reason tells them, that it is well worth the while for every man to deny himself outward pleasure for the good of his soul. But their governing opinion or judgment is contrary, viz. that it is not best. and that pleasures and the gratification of their lusts are worth more than any benefit they would obtain by seeking their salvation.

The reason of young people tells them that it is their true wisdom to improve the time of youth. Reason tells them that life is very uncertain. But when such persons hear ministers preach concerning the infinite importance of eternal things. the uncertainty of life, the peace and comfort that will be found in a state of happier existence with God, are told how light a thing the difficulty and sufferings of a holy life are in comparison, their reason assents to all this, but their practical judgments are the contrary. When a person has lately died, either in extreme terror and amazement, under a sense of the guilt of a mispent life, or full of joy and comfort, in consequence of a life of holy walking with God, their reason tells them that it would be well worth their while to labor and deny themselves all their lifetime to be ready for death, and to have a solid foundation of peace and comfort laid up against such an hour. But yet their practice is directly the reverse.

Second, some of their judgments of things are inconsistent with others. For instance, in temporal things, they judge that the good which is of long continuance is to be preferred before that which is of short continuance, and that a long-continued calamity is more to be dreaded and avoided than a short one.

Their governing judgment is thus in these things, but yet it is the reverse in spiritual things.

Again, such arguments as they judge to furnish good and clear evidence with them in those things that are agreeable to their sinful inclination, they think not to have any evidence in those things that are contrary to them. In temporal things they think it to be their wisdom to improve times of special advantage, and to watch against that which might ensnare them, or endanger their welfare, but in other things they think the reverse. In these things, and many more that might be mentioned, their judgments are inconsistent with themselves.

II. Their wills are inconsistent with their reason. This inconsistency is a consequence of the foregoing. For if their practical judgment be contrary to their own reason, it will follow that their wills are contrary to their reason. For the will ever follows the dictate of the practical judgment.

Their wills are contrary to their reason in two respects.

First, they will those things which their reason tells them are inconsistent with their duty. And so they are inconsistent with themselves, as their wills are inconsistent with their consciences. Conscience is a principle implanted in the heart of every man, and is as essential to his nature as the faculty of reason, for it is a natural and necessary attendant of that faculty. But the wills of wicked men are contrary to it, and inconsistent with it. They choose those things which they know to be evil, and ought not to be chosen. They choose that which their own reason tells them is unreasonable and vile, and unbecoming men, and justly provoking to their Maker, and contrary to the end for which they are made.

Hence arises an inward war in their own minds. Their wills and their consciences warring one against another. There is no true peace in their hearts, for they are at war with themselves, and therefore they are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, unless by a course of horrible violations of the dictates of their own conscience, they have proceeded so far in their war against their own consciences as to stupefy conscience, and lay it as it were dead, which is the case of some persons.

Second, they will those things which their reason tells them are contrary to their own interest, yea, those things which their own reason tells them are the way to their ruin and misery. At the very same time that wicked men are tempted to commit some sin, and their reason then tells them that it will expose them to the eternal wrath of God, and that it will therefore be a dreadful folly for them to do it, yet they will do it. Or when their reason tells them that the course in which they are going leads to destruction, and represents to them that it is the greatest folly, yet they will go on in it, and run the venture of being everlastingly undone.

So inconsistent are they with themselves, that they do and allow that of which they hope to repent, they choose that now for choosing which at the same time they expect and hope hereafter to charge themselves with great folly, and to be convinced that it is folly, and to lament and bewail it. Nay, they would not do it if they did not expect hereafter to see that it is very foolish in them so to do, and heartily to mourn for it.

In this respect they are so inconsistent with themselves that they are their own worst enemies. They are inconsistent with themselves, as two mortal enemies cannot consist together, or walk together. By choosing those things which their own reason tells them is contrary to their own interest, and tends to their own undoing, they may be said to hate their own souls, and to love their own ruin. Pro. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death."

III. Their wills and dispositions are inconsistent with their wills. The Jews would neither have a prophet to come eating and drinking, nor would they have him otherwise. They knew not what they would have themselves, there was no pleasing them. To eat and drink did not please them; that they reproached as drunkenness, and gluttony. Nor did it please them any more not to eat nor drink. This they reproached no less virulently, as though it were an argument that a man was out of his wits, and possessed by the devil. The inconsistency of wicked men's wills with themselves appears in the following things:

First, they do, in some respects, choose and refuse the same things.

I shall mention some instances.

1. In some respects, many of them wish to be converted from sin to God. They think that they should be ready to give almost all that they have in the world to be converted, and they pray to God to convert them, and seek for conversion, and take advice to that end, and use a great deal of labor for it. But yet if it be considered what conversion is, or what is meant by conversion, viz. the being turned from all their sins to God. They have no desire to be converted, they will not have conversion when it is offered them, when it comes to them they are not willing to be saved from sin, for they are not willing to part with their sins. When they think of the thing in the general, they wish that they were turned from sin. But when it comes to particulars, they cannot comply with it, they love their sins too well. When a particular lust comes and pleads to be indulged and gratified, then in this instance they have no wish to be converted, they are not willing to be turned from their sin altogether, they cannot bear entirely and forever to renounce and reject it. They have a wish to be converted, but not from enjoying their right hands, and right eyes. They pray that they may be thoroughly and savingly converted, and seem to wish and pray for it. But yet when it comes to them, they are not willing for any more than a partial conversion. They cannot comply with a thorough conversion, for a thorough conversion is a turning from every one of their sins. And that proves that they would be willing to be converted from their sins for a little while, but to part with them finally is what they cannot find it in their hearts to comply with.

2. Some wicked men do in certain respects desire that a work of humiliation may be wrought in them, and yet are utterly opposed to humiliation. They do many things that they may be humbled, and pray that they may be brought off from their own righteousness, and yet would by no means let it go, but are indeed building up their own righteousness all the time.

They seem in some respects to wish that they might submit to the justice and sovereignty of God in their condemnation, but yet are utterly averse to any such thing as owning God's justice. They are averse to this submission, as appears from their showing such a spirit of strife with God. They do not believe that God is just and sovereign, and how therefore is it possible that they should desire really to submit to God's justice and sovereignty? They cannot heartily and fervently desire to submit to God as just and sovereign, when they do not believe that he possesses those attributes, but think him unjust and tyrannical.

3. They in some respects wish that they might come to Christ, but indeed are utterly averse to come to him, so that their will is in this also inconsistent with itself. They pray that they may come to Christ, they are ready to say that they would give all the world for an interest in Christ; and yet they will not have an interest in him, for that is what is offered them, and what Christ is continually inviting and urging them to accept, but they refuse it. It is true they like some things in Christ, they like salvation from the pains of hell, they like that safety from everlasting misery which they hear is to be had in him. But there are other things in him which they do not like, his holiness, his salvation from sin, his kingly office, and therefore they will

not accept him as he is. If they could have a part of Christ without the rest they would, but they will not accept of the whole of Christ. Indeed they are not willing to come to Christ and cordially accept of him as a Savior from hell, for they do not see that he is sufficient to save. And besides, they are not convinced that they have deserved it. There is no such thing as being cordially willing to accept of a Savior, who offered to deliver us from an unjust and undeserved punishment. For the hearty accepting of him as a Savior from the punishment would be allowing the punishment to be just. And God's offering a Savior from undeserved punishment is an imposition upon them. A man therefore can never heartily and sincerely accept such an offer. At the same time that natural men seem to wish, and pray, and strive to come to Christ, they are in their hearts bitter enemies to him. And there is no such thing as a sincere willingness to accept of one towards whom at the same time we are bitter enemies.

4. Natural men in some respects are desirous to go to heaven, and yet are averse to heaven. They are full of designs as to what they will do hereafter that they may go to heaven, but yet have no inclination to that wherein heaven really consists. The employments of heaven, which consist altogether in holy acts and holy contemplation, in holy exercises and holy praises, are that for which they have no desires nor inclination. And for the happiness of heaven they have no relish, but on the contrary, a dislike and an aversion. For the happiness of heaven consists in holy communion with God and Christ, to which their natures are opposite. Nor have they any desire for the company of heaven. And when it is observed what heaven really is, they choose this world before heaven.

5. They wish to have salvation from misery, but yet are averse to those things wherein salvation consists. And at the same time that they pray to Christ to serve them, they undo themselves as fast as they can. They spend their time daily in working out their own ruin. They pray that they may be delivered from hell, and yet are all the while piling up fuel and kindling and blowing the fire. Thus their wills are inconsistent with themselves, as they do in some respects choose and refuse the same things.

Second, they dislike and refuse spiritual things as they are, and yet refuse to have them otherwise. This was the very case with the Jews in the text, they would not have a prophet come eating and drinking. If he did so, they looked on him very reproachfully. Nor yet would they have him not come eating and drinking, for if he did so they called him a mad man, and possessed with a devil, which is a lively specimen of the inconsistency of wicked men, of which we are speaking.

I will mention several instances of this inconsistency on the part of wicked men.

1. They do not like God as he is, and yet they would not like him if he were otherwise. They would not like him if he were otherwise than he is in those very things for which they most dislike him.

(1.) They dislike God because he is a holy God. This is the main foundation of the enmity that wicked men have against God. His perfect purity and holiness make them enemies to him, because from this perfection of his nature he necessarily hates sin, and so hates their sins, which they love, and he will not and cannot allow of any sin in them. They are utter enemies to such a holy God. And yet they would not like him if they supposed him to be an unholy being, or if they supposed him to be at all wanting in perfect holiness, for then he could not be depended upon. If he were unholy, they know that if he promised them anything they could have no certain dependence upon it, for an unholy being is liable to break his promises. If he were unholy they could have no dependence on his faithfulness, and therefore they would never be willing to give up themselves to him as their God, for they would not know how he would dispose of them, what he would do with them. If he were to obligate himself by covenant, yet they could have no

dependence upon it; and therefore they would by no means accept of such a God to be their God, to rule over them, and dispose of them.

(2.) They do not like God, because he is a God of justice. This indeed is a branch of his holiness, for being strictly and perfectly just, he is disposed to execute just punishment on all iniquity. Therefore they are exceeding enemies to him, for they are the persons who are obnoxious, being those that have committed iniquity, and exposed themselves to just punishment. And yet they would not like God if he were an unjust God. If he were an unjust being, that would be an insuperable objection with them against accepting him as their God, for then they would think with themselves, "how do I know how unjustly he may deal with me." And wicked men, however unjust they are, never like injustice against themselves. And they never would be persuaded to accept of such a God as their Lord and King, for they should then expect to be wronged and abused by him. They would dread committing themselves into the hands of a God that is infinite in power, and can do what he will with them, and has no principle of holiness or justice to keep him from using that power in the most unjust and abusive manner towards them.

Though they are enemies to God because of his justice, yet whenever at any time they think God deals unjustly, they quarrel with him for it. How frequent is it for natural men, when there are any of God's methods of providence, the justice of which they cannot see through, to have their hearts swell with enmity, and to be full of blasphemous, malignant thoughts against God, if they do not even manifest it outwardly by a fretful, discontented behavior, and murmuring speeches?

(3.) They do not like God because he is an Almighty God and is able to destroy them when he pleases. Nor yet would they like him if he were a weak being and of but little power. They would on this account refuse to close with him as their God, for they would have a God able to do great things for them. They wish to have many things done for them, and they would have a God that can do them.

(4.) They do not like God because he is an omniscient God, for hereby he sees all their wickedness. But yet neither would they like him if he did not know all things, for then in many cases he would not know what their case is, and what it requires, and what is best for them. He might ruin them in the disposal of them through mistake, he might not know how to extricate them out of difficulties in which they are or may be involved.

(5.) Natural men oftentimes dislike God in the exercises of his infinite sovereign mercy, when it is exercised towards others. They are greatly displeased at God's being so gracious to others. They dislike it much that God bestows converting grace upon them and pardoning mercy, and a title to eternal life upon them. When they hear of their conversion it is unpleasant news, and they find fault with it the more when the persons who seem to have received such mercy are very unworthy, and have been very great sinners. They think of the sins of which they have been guilty, and reckon up all the instances of wickedness they can think of, so that the mercy exercised towards them is the more displeasing because it appears so great in being bestowed on one so unworthy, like the elder brother, Luke 15:30, "But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." And yet they would not like God if he were not infinitely merciful, for then they would have less hopes of obtaining mercy themselves. They are angry because God appears so merciful in the exercises of his grace to others. But yet they should have God merciful, and are at the same time afraid that he is not merciful enough to be willing to pardon their sins, and bestow his blessing on them. Thus natural men do not like God as he is, nor yet would they like him if he were otherwise.

2. They do not like men that are holy, nor yet do they like men that are wicked. They do not like holy men, for they know that such do not approve of that which themselves love, and the lives of the godly are a condemnation of the wickedness of their own hearts and lives. Hence there is an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Gen. 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

But although they do not like men if they are godly, so neither do they like them if they are ungodly. They are more forward than the godly are to reprove others for their vice and wickedness, and bitterly to reflect on others for their pride, their covetousness, and their idleness. None are more apt to find fault with wickedness in others than those who are wicked themselves, and one great reason is that other men's lusts clash with theirs. Thus one man's pride crosses the pride of another, for it is the nature of pride to desire to be alone in advancement, to make the person in whom it is affect to be a God, to appropriate all power and all honor to himself as his own prerogative.

But such an aim in one man clashes with such an aim in another. Hence there are none that can bear pride in others so ill, as those that are very proud themselves, and there never are such strife and enmity as between proud, haughty men. Proud men love to have others walk humbly before them, and nothing enrages them so much as to have others carry themselves proudly. For the same reason covetous men dislike covetous men, for this lust clashes with the same lust in another. Every covetous man strives to get all into his own hands, to get and keep all that he can to himself from his neighbor.

So the lusts of envy, and malice, and revenge, are hated in others by envious and malicious men; because none are so obnoxious to malice, and envy, and revenge, as those that have the most of these qualities. Hence the wicked world on earth, who are at enmity with the church of God for its holiness, do not at all agree together. Though they agree in being alike under the power of wickedness, yet how full is the world of wicked men of strife and contention, of perpetual jars, animosities, and confusion!

Rom. 1:29, 30, 31, 32, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

So Tit. 3:3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And hence also it comes to pass that devils and wicked men in hell, though they hate angels and saints in heaven for their holiness, have yet no love one to another. Though they all agree in being perfectly wicked, yet they hate one another with implacable hatred, and are continually mortifying and tormenting one another so that hell is a world of perfect malice and contention.

3. They refuse to accept of heaven as it is. Yet they would not like it if it were otherwise. As has been observed before, they have no relish for the holy enjoyments and employments of heaven. They dislike heaven for its holiness, and yet they would not like it if it were unholy. For then they would be liable to the same troubles and vexations in heaven that they meet with in this world. If it were not that heaven differs from this world in holiness, it would be as full of pride and malice, envy, revenge, contention, injustice, violence, and cruelty, as this world is, and so would be as vexatious a world as this is. Wicked men are as

liable to the trouble and vexation of the world, which arise from those things, as godly men, and in some respects more so, for they have no divine supports against those things, no safer portion to which their hearts betake themselves.

Third, the things that wicked men choose, imply an inconsistency in their own nature. The things which they would have are impossibilities and self-contradictions.

1. They would have a sufficient Savior, and not a holy one. They would not have a holy Savior, because such a Savior does not at all agree with their lusts. But yet they would have a sufficient Savior, one that is sufficient to save them from hell, and so one that is sufficient to make a proper atonement for all their sins, to make full satisfaction to the justice of God, that they may escape the penalty of that justice. But these things prove a great inconsistency, for how is it possible that a Savior, who is not perfectly holy himself, should make satisfaction for the unholiness of others? How is it possible that one who deserves to suffer the eternal wrath of God himself for his own sin, should by his sufferings appease God's wrath for the sin of others?

They would have a worthy Savior, as appears in this; when they are awakened, and in some measure sensible of their guilt, they dare not come to Christ, because they cannot see that he has worthiness enough to commend them to God. They are afraid that he is not worthy enough. And yet they dislike Christ because he is a holy Savior! And what an inconsistency is this! How can he be a worthy Savior, and not a holy one? So that their choice does in effect contain this inconsistency in it, that they would have a Savior who is infinitely worthy, without worthiness.

2. They wish for salvation from misery without salvation from sin. They do not love misery any better than others, and hope to be saved from it. And some of them are in distress for fear of misery. But yet they would have it without being parted from their sins, which is in its own nature impossible, for the creature that is sinful, must be miserable. For misery consists in separation from the fountain of happiness, and an enmity between the creature and the chief good. But sin implies in its own nature such a separation. It is a separation from that God who is the fountain of good, and is enmity against him, and therefore necessarily brings enmity from that being against the sinner, if it be continued. Sin is the seed of misery. Misery is the necessary fruit of it. It is necessary from the nature of God, who, being infinitely holy, necessarily hates it, and so necessarily arrays himself against that being who remains under the pollution and guilt of it. And it is necessary from the nature of man, and the nature of sin. Misery is the natural fruit of sin, as the bud and blossom are the natural fruit of that on which they grow, and is so spoken of, Eze. 7:9, 10, "And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. Behold the day, behold it is come; the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed; pride hath budded."

Natural men would be freed from hell without being saved from sin, which is an inconsistency and impossibility. For where sin remains the reigning power, it will necessarily kindle up the flames of hell, and will bring on the torments of hell. Indeed, while men remain in the body, in the midst of the carnal objects of this world to engross the mind, to please the carnal appetites, to stupefy the conscience, and lull the soul asleep, they may avoid the torments of hell for a little while. But when the body comes to be dissolved, and all worldly objects, diversions, and entertainments come to an end, and the polluted and guilty soul comes to be stripped and turned out naked, infernal horror and misery will naturally and necessarily arise in such a soul. So that there is no such thing as being saved from hell, without being saved from sin.

3. They desire happiness without holiness. Wicked men have as earnest a desire of happiness as others. They are restlessly saying, "Who will show us any good?" And yet they are enemies to holiness. Here also they are inconsistent with themselves, for there is no such thing as happiness without holiness. The happiness of the creature consists in holiness. It is as great an inconsistency to suppose that a creature should be happy without being holy, as that a man should enjoy all the strength, and ease, and activity, and other comforts of health, in sore sickness; or that the notes of a tune should be harmonious that are disproportionate and discordant. So that they would be happy, and yet would not be happy. The thing they choose contains as great an inconsistency as if they should choose light or brightness, consisting in the blackness of darkness.

Fourth, in things that do most nearly concern them, they will neither choose nor refuse. The things of religion are things that concern them in the highest degree. It is no matter of indifference to them, whether they will betake themselves in good earnest to the business of religion or not, whether they will obtain heaven, or be content with a portion in this life. But yet many natural men seem to remain in suspense about these things all the days of their lives. They are always at a loss, always halting between two opinions, which Elijah reproves, 1 Kin. 18:21, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." No wonder that they had nothing to answer, for their unreasonableness and inconsistency too manifestly appeared in it. Many, who hear of these subjects from their infancy, never come to a thorough conclusion in their own minds, whether they will continue to go on in the way to hell, or whether they will do what must be done to escape it. They neither resolve that they will forsake all their sins, nor yet that they will retain them. They do not determine to hearken to the warnings and counsels given to them, nor yet do they fully reject them. They have life and death set before them, one or the other, but they never come to a determination which they will choose.

Fifth, in pursuing the objects which they desire, their lusts are inconsistent with each other. It has before been shown that the lusts of one wicked man clash with those of another. But not only is it thus. Some of the lusts of the same person disagree with other lusts of his. Often, wicked men's covetousness clashes with their pride. Their pride prompts them to many things that their covetousness forbids. It would be agreeable to men's pride to make a splendid show in their houses and apparel, and manner of living, who yet are not willing, through their covetousness, to be at the cost of it. So their covetousness often thwarts their sensuality. Their sensual disposition inclines them to feast their appetites, but their covetousness will not allow it.

Sometimes men's sloth and idleness clash with their other lusts, with their pride, their covetousness, and sensuality. These lusts draw them one way to obtain much of the world, in order to pamper and gratify them. But their slothfulness draws another, or rather holds them and binds their hands from obtaining these things.

IV. The outward show of wicked men disagrees with their hearts. They very often make an appearance that is exceedingly different and contrary to what they really are inwardly. They have the clothing of sheep, but the nature of wolves, Mat. 7:15. They are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. They make a show as though they believed the truth of the gospel, and believed that God was an infinitely great and an infinitely excellent being. They make a show of great respect to God, a show of reverence and love, when indeed they have no such thing in their hearts, but the contrary. The outward show they make, which is at war with their hearts, consists either in their words, or in their behavior.

The show they make in words is inconsistent with their hearts. Many of them profess to believe that God is an infinitely excellent being, when indeed they think that the meanest of their carnal enjoyments is more excellent than he. They profess to believe that there is another world, a heaven and a hell, when indeed they realize no such thing. They profess to believe that Christ is the only Savior, and that they can be saved in no other. And yet they all the while believe in their hearts that there are other saviors, and particularly that they can be saviors for themselves by their own strength and righteousness.

They do abominably dissemble in the profession they make of the favor of God, and of love to him, and willingness to obey him, and desire to glorify him. They have not a jot of these things in their hearts, but are all the while wholly under the influence of vile carnal principles in all that they do, and are only aiming at selfish ends and serving their lusts in all.

So did those Jews dissemble that came to Jeremiah and desired him to inquire of the Lord. Jer. 42:20, "For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it." So did the Jews of whom we read in the test dissemble. They pretended to be enemies of gluttony, and drunkenness, and to dislike any such thing as associating with sinners. And so made a pretense of zeal against wickedness, in their opposition to Christ; when indeed they were actuated by a love to wickedness, and were enemies to Christ, for the sake of his holiness. So they pretended to be influenced by enmity against the devil in their opposition to John the Baptist, who they pretended had a devil; when indeed it was not enmity against the devil, but against God. Many pretend a great deal of love to God in what they do, when it is only love to the world at bottom. Eze. 33:31, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

The show which they make in their prayers is quite inconsistent with their hearts. Their very approach to God in this duty has a show of religion in it without the reality. And those things they say in their prayers are hypocritical dissembling pretenses. They profess honor, reverence, trust, humility, a sense of unworthiness, repentance towards God, trust in Christ as a Mediator, a willingness to forsake sin, from which they pray to be delivered, and thankfulness for the divine mercies. In this manner they resemble the Jews spoken of in Isa. 29:13, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth; and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men;" and in Psalms 78:36, 37, "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." And many of them make a show in words, in conversation with their neighbor, that is quite inconsistent with their hearts. They are forward in religious conversation, in giving an account of their experience in a show of zeal, merely to be seen of men, their God is themselves, their own honor, and the esteem of men. It is themselves whom they love and honor in everything, and not God.

They often make that show in their external behavior that is inconsistent with their hearts. Many who are destitute of the least spark of love to God, and are at utter enmity with him, will make a great show of respect to him in many things in their behavior. They may put on a religious saint-like visage, may seem devout in keeping the sabbath, and in their attendance on religious duties and the ordinances of worship, may in some things be very strict, and may appear to do all from a holy respect to God. So it was of old with the Israelites. Isa. 58:1, 2, 3, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me

the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours."

So did the Pharisees of old. They made a great show of love and holy regard to God in their behavior. They abounded in religious duties, they fasted twice a week, and they were very strict in many things. They were so in many duties of the moral law, they were not extortioners, nor unjust, nor adulterers. And they were exceedingly exact in duties of the ceremonial law. They gave tithes of all that they possessed, and so exact were they in paying tithes, that they tithed all the herbs of their gardens, as mint, anise, and the like, and put on an exceedingly religious countenance, and wore a righteous garment for a show of great humility. And yet had no love to God in their hearts, but were a generation of vipers, and most bitter enemies to God and Christ, and cruel persecutors of good men.

V. The practice of wicked men is often very inconsistent with their profession.

It is so, whether we look at the profession which they make in common with others who are brought up under the light of the gospel, or at the distinguishing and extraordinary profession which some of them make.

First, if we look at the professions which they make in common with the generality of those who are brought up under the gospel. These do in general profess that there is a God, an infinitely great and holy God, who hates sin, and who is everywhere present, who always sees them, has his eye continually upon them, sees what they do in secret as well as what is done openly. A God, who not only knows all their words and actions, but sees all their thoughts, and who is able to do what he pleases with them, and can save or destroy them as he will.

But how does the practice of the greater part of them consist with their profession when they live in direct opposition to his commands, when they live as though there were no God that had the care and government of the world, and as though he were not a holy God, but altogether such an one as themselves, liking ways of sin as well as they, or as though they thought him a weak being, and not able to do them any great matter of hurt, or as though they thought they were stronger than he, and should be able to make their part good with him another day? 1 Cor. 10:22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"

How does that wickedness, which many persons who are brought up under gospel light commit in secret, those abominable secret practices of which many young people are guilty, agree with their professing that God is everywhere present? These things they do not commit openly for fear of human punishment, or for fear of shame and disgrace among men. And yet they commit them boldly, and live on them in the sight of God, upon whose favor they profess that their happiness infinitely more depends than on the esteem of men.

They profess to believe that there is another world, and a future judgment, and that they must in a little time stand before the judgment-seat of God, to give an account of themselves to him. And that then the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart made manifest. And that then God will call them to a strict account of their improvement of their time, and all their talents, and that for every idle word men must give account in the day of judgment. And that then every man shall have his state everlastingly and unalterably fixed by the sentence of the great Judge, according to the things done in the body, that they who have done well shall be invited into heaven, where they shall enjoy honor, and

glory, and pleasure unspeakable forevermore, and that they who have done evil, shall be sentenced and sent down to hell, into everlasting fire, with the devil and his angels, where they shall endure unspeakable torments, as in a furnace of fire, without any end, or any hope, and that they shall have no rest day nor night; and that their souls shall be fixed in one or other of those states in a little time, as soon as ever the body dies.

Now how does their practice consist with such a profession, while they live idle, careless lives, little troubling themselves about the good of their souls, and have their hearts and pursuits after the vanities of the world, just as if they never expected any other world but this, going on in sins against the plainest commands, and loudest warnings, and fullest light, and conviction of their own conscience? How does this consist with the profession of a belief that they must in a little time be called to give account of themselves to God? Would any spectator who should judge only by their practice, in the least imagine that these men expected within a few years to burn in everlasting fire, if they did not please and serve an infinitely holy God, and to be received to an everlasting paradise of blessedness if they did. Could he be persuaded to think that such men are in heart, as they profess to be, the followers of the meek, holy, and humble Lamb of God, of him who laid down his life for his enemies?

Second, if we look at the profession which some of them make of special and distinguishing experiences of the influence of God's grace in their hearts, their practice is very inconsistent with their profession. Persons may make a profession of such experiences, and yet be carnal and wicked men. So did some of the Galatians, of whom the apostle was afraid, lest he had bestowed upon them labor in vain. They professed great experience of the sweetness and blessedness which is to be had in religion, and experienced in the truths of the gospel. Gal. 4:11, 15, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." At their first seeming conversion, they appeared to be exceedingly lifted up with their new light, and full of joy and comfort, and full of affection. But by this expostulation of the apostle it appears that their lives afterwards did not well agree with their profession. Some wicked men may profess that they have seen their own utter insufficiency and helplessness, their own vileness and wickedness, and have been brought to God's footstool self-emptied and self-abased, as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. But yet how ill does their walk and life agree with such a profession! In this none appear fuller of themselves than they. None seem to manifest more of a spirit of self-sufficiency, and of dependence on their own righteousness, or more high conceit of their own goodness, or are more ready to say to others, "Stand by thyself, come not nigh to me, for I am holier than thou." None appear in their walk and conversation further from lying in the dust as being poor in spirit than they. So it was with the Pharisees, they pretended to be extraordinarily emptied of themselves, and to have a low thought of themselves, in their wearing a rough garment, and in so often keeping days of fasting. And yet none were more self-righteous and self-sufficient than these very men, who are set forth in sacred history as living examples of self-righteousness to all succeeding ages.

So some of them may profess that they have had great discoveries made to their souls of God's glory and excellency, and that they have seen how much more glorious God is than all earthly things. But if it be so, why do not they cleave to God, and follow him, rather than other things? If they have known God to be so much more excellent than the things of the world, because they have had acquaintance with God, why do they in their practice cast off God for the sake of the things of the world? Why do they in their practice prefer a little of the world, a little worldly gain, a little worldly honor, or a little worldly convenience or pleasure, before God? Certainly, if God be more excellent than the whole world, as they profess that they

have seen him to be, then surely he is worth more than so small a part of the world.

So they may tell what love they have found in their hearts to God, how they have found their hearts drawn out in love to him at different times. But if they love him so well, why do they take no more care to please him? Why are they so careless of his honor, and of their duty to him? Why do they allow themselves in practices which they know he hates, and utterly forbids?

So they may profess that they have seen the truth of the gospel, and that they not only think, but know, that the Scripture is the Word of God. But if it be so, why do they not take more heed to it? why do they live not only as if they were not certain of it, but as if they were certain of the contrary? If they know that those commands which are in the Bible are the commands of God, then they are worthy of the greatest regard. If they know that those promises and threatenings which are found there are the promises and threatenings of God, then surely they should be of great weight with us. Why do they seem to be of so little weight with them?

So they may tell how God has manifested his love to their souls, has given his Spirit to witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and that they have much communion with God. But if God has done such great things for them, and they are admitted to such unspeakable privileges above others, surely they ought to do more than others. They should not appear more carnal, and careless, and unchristian in their temper and walk than other men who make no such pretenses. Thus wicked men's practice is very often inconsistent with their profession, agreeably to Tit. 1:16, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

VI. Their practice is inconsistent with their hope of eternal life. Men in general who live in Christian countries, hope to go to heaven, and there to possess eternal glory with God, and Christ, and holy saints and angels, though some of them have a much more confident hope than others. Some of them think that God has already made over this glory to them by firm promises, they look on heaven as their own, they think they belong to that world, and have an inheritance reserved there for them.

But the practice of wicked men is very inconsistent with such a hope, it is very displeasing to that God, and that glorious Redeemer, with whom they hope to spend their eternity in heaven. Though they live wickedly, yet they hope in a little time to go to be with an infinitely holy God, to be received by him with perfect approbation and delight, to be near to him, and to dwell in the courts of his love. They hope to enter into that same holy of holies, into which Christ the forerunner of saints has entered, and there to dwell, there to be as a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out. Yea, they hope there to sit in that heavenly holy of holies, to be admitted to a higher privilege than the high priests were of old in the earthly holy of holies, who were admitted only to appear in the holy of holies once a year. What holiness was expected of the high priests of old who were admitted to this privilege! What holiness then may well be expected of those who hope to be admitted to a so much greater privilege! Their wicked life is very unsuitable to that state of heaven. Those who are in heaven are all perfectly holy, and so must they become if ever they go to heaven. They will perfectly hate all wickedness, and perfectly delight in the contrary. How disagreeable therefore is the hope of spending eternity in such a heaven, to their wallowing like swine in the filth and mire of sin, and feeding with such eagerness and delight on the loathsome objects of their lusts, as worms feed with pleasure on the loathsome carcass!

Their wicked life is very unfit for the company of heaven, with which they must spend an eternity, if ever they arrive there, even with the holy angels and saints. Heb. 12:22, 23, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." How disagreeable is a carnal, worldly, sensual, impure life, to a hope of being one of such an assembly as this to all eternity!

Their wicked life is very disagreeable to the eternal business of heaven, which consists in employing their faculties altogether on holy objects, in employing their understandings in viewing and contemplating the holy perfections of God, and his wonderful works, and their wills and affections in loving God, and delighting themselves in him, and their whole souls in praising and serving him. Rev. 22:3, 4, "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." How inconsistent is a life spent in this world in the service of lust and of the devil, to a hope of spending eternity in such a holy manner as this!

Their wicked life is unfitted for the pleasure and entertainment of heaven, which consist in delighting and rejoicing in God, in loving him, and in holy communion with him. How unsuited to a hope of enjoying such a happiness as this throughout eternity is it to place all one's delight and happiness here in hoarding up worldly pelf, in gratifying the bodily appetites and sensitive desires, and in those pleasures that are common to the cattle and the swine?

Wicked men hope to spend their eternity in that world, which is a world of perfect peace and love, and to dwell there forever, where are no jars nor strife, but perfect agreement, harmony, and love forever. Yet many of them live a life of malice and contention in this world, are very often in one strife or other, and always carry about in their breasts a malice and hatred towards some of their neighbors, and towards some of those same persons with whom they pretend to hope to spend their eternity in such perfect love and amity. If we in our thoughts compare the life that many men actually live in this world, with that life which they hope to live in another world, how ill do they consist together; how disagreeable and shocking is the comparison, or the union of them in our thoughts! How many are there who now are drunkards or unclean persons, or who live in the neglect of secret prayer, and who cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. And how many that are mere earth-worms in covetousness and eagerness after the world; how many proud men whose God is their earthly honor; how many wrathful men who spend their days in hatred of their neighbor; how many such are there who hope in a little time to be with an infinitely holy God, in his glorious presence, in his holy of holies, and with Jesus Christ, and in the arms of his love, and to be of the assembly of holy angels and saints in perfect purity, holiness, and love, loving, contemplating, and admiring God's glory, and enjoying unspeakable blessedness in communion with God! Thus wicked men's practice disagrees with their hopes.

VII. The practice of wicked men is inconsistent with itself.

First, their practice at one time is inconsistent with their practice at another. They are not of a piece with themselves at different times, but are such as the apostle James compares to "a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed;" and such as he called "double-minded." At one time they are of one mind, with respect to the things of religion; and at another, of another; and so have one mind against another. It is so with false professors of religion. They are not steadfast in God's covenant, nor in the practice of religion. At one time they may seem to be much affected with the things of religion, and greatly engaged in their spirits

about it, as though they could even pluck out their own eyes for God and Christ's sake, may be full of religious conversation, and may seem forward in religious deeds. But, if we observe them, all their goodness is as the morning cloud, all their religiousness is over, and they appear as carnal, and senseless, and as irreligious as ever. Their religious affections are all gone, their religious practice is gone, and "it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

So it is with the hearers, that hear the Word of God, and anon with joy receive it, but in time of temptation fall away. So it was with many of Christ's followers. They followed him for a while, and by and by left him.

There were some who seemed to believe in Christ and followed him for a while. But Christ did not commit himself to them, he knew they were of an unstable mind, and would not be consistent with themselves. Some of them were for a while greatly affected with his preaching and with the miracles that he wrought, and it is said of them that the glorified God who had given such power to men, and said, "Never man spake like this man." John 7:46. And it seems as though some of the same Jews who had their affections so raised when Christ was coming into Jerusalem, and who cried, "Hosannah to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" did presently after cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" There are many professors like those, and like the Israelites, that sang God's praise, and soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel, that "turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow." That is, a bow that missed the mark to which it seemed to direct the arrow. The arrow seems to be pointed right, as though it would hit the mark, but yet the bow unexpectedly tends quite another way.

There are many disciples like Judas, who was at one time a disciple, and a traitor at another. It is commonly so that when false professors come to be tried by any remarkable allurements of the world, or by special difficulties which they meet with in the way of duty, that their practice as such times is quite inconsistent with their practice at other times. While times are smooth, and the way plain, and the external practice of religion seems to be consistent with their worldly interests, they are very religious. But when times are changed, and they cannot be religious without seeing them crossed, they appear quite another sort of men.

Thus their practice at one time is inconsistent with their practice at another.

Second, their practice in some things is inconsistent with their practice in others at the same time.

1. Their moral and religious practice in some things does not consist with their irreligious and impure practice in others. False professors are very commonly widely different in this respect from those who are sincere and upright. Sincere Christians are universally holy. They have regard to all God's commands. It is their sincere desire, aim, and endeavor to do their duty in every respect. But it is generally far otherwise with hypocrites. In some things they are like Christians, in others like heathens. Sometimes they appear earnestly religious in duties that immediately respect God, as in attending ordinances, and in appearing devout in external duties of the first table. But in duties that respect their neighbor, there is but little appearan

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