

An Alarm to the Unconverted 5 of 5

by Joseph Alleine

The sermon emphasizes the urgency of making a choice between eternal life and eternal death, and the consequences of rejecting Christ.

Duration: 1:18:36

Scripture: Matthew 25:24, Romans 7:14-15, Romans 7:18, Romans 7:23

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, Joseph Alayne passionately urges his audience to embrace the kingdom of heaven and not neglect eternal glory. He emphasizes that God offers salvation and eternal joy to those who submit to His mercy, accept His Son, and serve Him in righteousness and holiness. Alayne pleads with his listeners to abandon their sins and turn to Jesus Christ, reminding them that all manner of sins and blasphemy can be forgiven if they thoroughly repent and come to Christ. He encourages his audience to study God's word, humble themselves before God, and follow Him diligently, warning that those who refuse to do so will be condemned as wicked and slothful servants.

Transcript

An Alarm to the Unconverted Sinner by Joseph Alain A Sure Guide to Heaven by Joseph Alain Concluded Tape 5 Behold a city of pure transparent gold whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones whose gates are pearls, whose light is glory, whose temple is God Believest thou this? If you do, are you not beside yourself that will not take possession when the gates are thrown open to you and you are bidden to enter? O ye sons of folly, will you embrace a dunghill and refuse a kingdom? Behold, the Lord takes you up into the mountain, shows you the kingdom of heaven and all the glories thereof, and tells you, All this will I give you if you will fall down and worship me, if you will submit to mercy, accept my Son and serve me in righteousness and holiness. O fools and slow of heart to believe! Will you seek and serve the world and neglect eternal glory? What, not enter into paradise when the flaming sword which was once set to keep you out is now used to drive you in? But you will say, I am uncharitable to think you infidels and unbelievers. What then shall I think of you? Either you are desperate unbelievers that do not credit it, or beside yourselves that you know and believe the excellence and eternity of this glory, and yet do so fearfully neglect it.

Do but attend to what is offered you, a blessed kingdom, a kingdom of glory, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of peace and an everlasting kingdom. Here you shall dwell, here you shall reign forever, and

the Lord shall seat you on a throne of glory, and with his own hand shall set the royal diadem upon your head and give you a crown, not of thorns, for there shall be no sinning or suffering there, not of gold, for this shall be viler than the dirt in that day, but a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory. Yea, you shall put on glory as a robe and shall shine like the sun in the firmament of your Father.

Look now on your worthless flesh. This flesh, which is mere dust and ashes, shall be brighter than the stars. In short, you shall be made like unto the angels of God and behold his face in righteousness.

Look now and tell me, do you not yet believe? If not, conscience must pronounce you an infidel, for it is the very word of God that I speak. But if you say you believe, let me next know your resolution. Will you embrace this for your happiness? Will you forego your sinful gains, your forbidden pleasures? Will you trample on this world's esteem and stop your ears to its flatteries and rest yourself out of its embraces? Will you be content to take up with reproach and poverty if they lie in the way to heaven and follow the Lord with humble self-denial in a mortified and flesh-displeasing life? If so, all is yours in that forever.

And is not the offer a fair one? Is it not just that he should be damned, that will go on and perish, when all this may be had by taking it? Will you not take God at his word? Will you not let go your hold of the world and lay hold on eternal life? If not, let conscience tell you whether you are not beside yourself, that you should neglect so happy a choice by which you might be made happy forever. 3. God will give you unspeakable privileges in this life. Though the fullness of your blessedness shall be reserved till hereafter, yet God will give you no little things in hand.

He will redeem you from your thralldom. He will pluck you from the paw of the lion. The serpent shall bruise your heel, but you shall bruise his head.

He shall deliver you from this present evil world. Prosperity shall not destroy you. Adversity shall not separate him and you.

He will redeem you from the power of the grave and make the king of terrors a messenger of peace to you. He will take out the curse from the cross and make affliction the refining pot to purify the metal, the fan to blow off the chaff, the medicine to cure the mind. He will save you from the arrest of the law and turn the curse into a blessing to you.

He has the keys of hell and of death and shutteth, and no man openeth. And he will shut his mouth, as once he did the lions, that you shall not be hurt of the second death. Besides, he will not only save from misery, but install you into unspeakable prerogatives.

He will bestow himself upon you. He will be a friend and a father to you. He will be a sun and a shield to you.

In a word, he will be a god to you. And what more can be said? What may you expect that a god should do for you and be to you? That he will be, that he will do. She that marries a prince expects he should do for her like a prince, that she may live in suitable state and have an answerable dowry.

He that has a king for his father or a friend expects he should do for him like a king. Alas, the kings and monarchs of the earth, so much above you, are but like the painted butterflies amongst the rest of their kind, or the fair-coloured palmer worm amongst the rest of the worms, if compared with God. As he infinitely exceeds the glory and power of his glittering dust, so he will, beyond all proportion, exceed in doing for his favourites, whatever princes can do for theirs.

He will give you grace and glory and withhold no good thing from you. He will take you for his sons and daughters and make you heirs of his promises and establish his everlasting covenant with you. He will justify you from all that law, conscience and Satan can charge upon you.

He will give you free access into his presence and accept your person and receive your prayers. He will abide in you and hold a constant and friendly communion with you. His ears shall be open, his door open, his door open at all times to you.

His blessings shall rest upon you and he will make your enemy serve you and work out all things for good unto you. And now, beloved, let me know your mind. What do you intend to do? Will you go on and die or will you turn and lay hold on eternal life? How long will you linger in Sodom? How long will you halt between two opinions? Have you not yet resolved whether Christ or Barabbas, whether bliss or torment, whether this vain and wretched world or the paradise of God be the better choice? Is it a disputable case whether the Abana or Farpar of Damascus be better than all the streams of Eden, or whether the vile pool of sin is to be preferred before the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? Can the world in good earnest do that for you which Christ can? Will it stand by you to eternity? Will pleasures, lands, titles, and treasures descend with you? If not, had you need not look after something that will? What do you mean to stand wavering? Shall I leave you at last like Agrippa, only almost persuaded? You are forever lost if left here.

Is good be not all is not altogether a Christian. How long will you rest in idle wishes and fruitless purposes? When will you come to a fixed, firm, and full resolve? Do you not see how Satan cheats you by tempting you to delay? How long has he drawn you on in the way of perdition? Well, do not put me off with a dilatory answer. Tell me not later.

I must have your immediate consent. If you are not now resolved, while the Lord is treating with you and inviting you, much less likely are you to be later. When these impressions are worn off and you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, will you give me your hand? Will you set open the door and give the Lord Jesus a full and ready possession? Will you put your name unto His covenant? What do you resolve upon? If you still delay, my labor is lost and all is likely to come to nothing.

Come, cast in your lot, make your choice. Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.

Today a few will hear His voice. Why should not this be the day from which you are able to date your happiness? Why should you venture a day longer in this dangerous and dreadful condition? What of God should this night require your soul? O that thou mightest know in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace before they be hid from thine eyes. This is your day, and it is but a day.

Others have had their day and have received their doom, and now are you brought upon the stage of this world, here to act your part for your eternity. Remember, you are now upon your good behavior for everlasting. If you do not make a wise choice now, you are undone forever.

What your present choice is, such must be your eternal condition. And is it true indeed, are life and death but your choice? Why then, what hinders but that you should be happy? Nothing does or can hinder but your own willful neglect or refusal. It was the saying of the eunuch to Philip, See, here is water.

What doth hinder me to be baptized? So I may say to you, See, here is Christ. Here is mercy, pardon, life. What hinders but that you should be pardoned and saved? One of the martyrs, as he was praying at the

stake, had his pardon set by him in a box, which indeed he rightly refused, because upon unworthy terms.

But here the terms are most honorable and easy. O sinner, will you perish with your pardon by you? Do but henceforth give your consent to Christ to renounce your sins, deny yourself, take up the oak and the cross, and you carry the day. Christ is yours.

Pardon, peace, life, blessedness are all yours. And is not this an offer worth embracing? Why should you hesitate or doubtfully dispute about the case? Is it not past controversy whether God be better than sin and glory than vanity? Why should you forsake your own mercy and sin against your own life? When will you shake off your sloth and lay by your excuses? Boast not of tomorrow. You know not where you may launch this night.

Now the Holy Spirit is striving with you. He will not always strive. Have you not felt your heart warmed by his word and been almost persuaded to leave off your sins and come to Christ? Have you not felt some motions in your mind in which you have been warned of your danger and told what your careless course would end in? It may be you are like young Samuel, who when the Lord called once and again knew not the voice of the Lord.

But these motions are the offers and callings and strivings of the Spirit. O take advantage of the tide and know the day of your visitation. Now the Lord stretches wide his arms to receive you.

He beseeches you by us. How movingly, how meltingly, how compassionately he calls. The church is put into a sudden ecstasy at the sound of his voice.

The voice of my beloved. O will you turn a deaf ear to his voice? Is it not the voice that breaks the cedars and makes a mountain to skip like a calf, that shakes the wilderness and divides the flames of fire? It is not Sinai's thunder, but a soft and still voice. It is not the voice of Mount Ebal, a voice of cursing and terror, but the voice of Mount Gerizim, the voice of blessing and glad tidings of good things.

It is not the voice of the trumpet nor the noise of war, but a message of peace from the King of Peace. I may say to your sinners, Martha, to her sister, the Master is come and he calleth for thee. Now then with Mary arise quickly and come unto him.

How sweet are his invitations! He cries in the open concourse, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. John 7.37 How bountiful is he! He excludes none. Whosoever will, let him come, take the water of life freely.

Revelations 22.17 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wines that I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live. Come unto me, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. How does he bemoan the obstinate refuser? O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered thy children! Is it him gathereth her chickens under her wings, and you would not? Behold me! Behold me! I have stretched out my hands all the day to a rebellious people. O be persuaded now at last to throw yourselves into the arms of his love.

Behold, O ye sons of men, the Lord Jesus hath thrown open the prison, and now he comes to you by his ministers, and beseeches you to come out. If it were from a palace or a paradise that Christ did call you, it were no wonder that you were unwilling. And yet how easily was Adam beguiled from it.

But it is from your prison, from your chains, from the dungeon, from the darkness that he calls you. And yet will you not come? He calls you unto liberty, and yet will you not hearken? His yoke is easy, his laws are liberty, his service is freedom, and whatever prejudice you may have against his ways, if God may be believed, you shall find them all pleasure and peace, and shall taste sweetness and joy unutterable, and take infinite delight and felicity in them. Beloved, I am loath to leave you.

I cannot tell how to give you up. I am now ready to close, but I would see a covenant made between Christ and you before I end. What? Shall I leave you at last as I found you? Have you read thus far and not yet resolved to abandon all your sins and to close with Jesus Christ? Alas, what shall I say? What shall I do? Will you turn off all my importunity? Have I run in vain? Have I used so many arguments and spent so much time to persuade you? And must I sit down at last in disappointment? But it is a small matter that you turn me off.

You put a slight upon the God that made you. You reject the compassion and beseechings of the Savior, and will be found resistors of the Holy Ghost if he will not now be prevailed upon to repent and be converted. Well, though I have called you long, and you have refused, I shall yet this once more lift up my voice like a trumpet and cry from the highest places of the city before I conclude with a miserable exclamation, All is over.

Once more shall call after regardless sinners, that if it be possible I may awaken them. O earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the word of the Lord! Jeremiah 22 29 Unless you are resolved to die, lend your ears to the last calls of mercy. Behold, in the name of God I make open proclamation to you.

Hark unto me, O ye children! Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. O everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat. Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. Harken diligently unto me, and ye eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me.

Here your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. O everyone that is sick of any manner of disease or torment, or is possessed with an evil spirit, whether of pride, fury, lust, or covetousness, come ye to the physician. Bring your sick.

Lo, here is he that healeth all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases among the people. O everyone that is in distress, gather yourselves unto Christ, and he will become a captain over you. He will be your protection from the arrests of the law.

He will save you from the hand of justice. Behold, he is an open sanctuary to you. He is a known refuge.

Away with your sins, and come in unto him, lest the avenger of blood seize you, lest devouring wrath overtake you. O every blind and ignorant sinner, come and buy eyesalves, that you may see. Away with your excuses.

You are forever lost if you continue in this state. But accept Christ for your prophet, and he will be a light unto you. Cry unto him for knowledge.

Study his word. Take pains about religion. Humble yourself before God, and he will teach you his way, and make you wise unto salvation.

But if you will not follow him, but sit down because you have but one talent, he will condemn you for a wicked and slothful servant. Matthew 25 verses 24-26 O every profane sinner, come in and live. Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on you.

Be entreated, O return, come. You have filled your mouth with those execrations. All manner of sins and blasphemy shall be forgiven you if you will but thoroughly turn unto Christ, and come in.

O unclean sinner, put away your whoredoms out of your sight, and your adulteries from between your breasts. Give yourself unto Christ as a vessel of holiness, alone for his use. And then though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Hero, ye drunkards, how long will you be drunk? Put away your wine. Though you have rolled in the filthiness of your sin, give yourselves unto Christ, to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Embrace his righteousness, accept his government. And though you have been vile, he will wash you. Hero, ye loose companions, whose delight is in vain and wicked society, to sport away your time and carnal mirth.

Come in at wisdom's call, and choose her in her ways, and you shall live. Hero, ye scorers, hear the word of the Lord. Though you make a sport at godliness and its professors, though you have made a scorn of Christ in his ways, yet even to you does he call to gather you under the wings of his mercy.

In a word, though you should be found among the worst of that black roll, yet upon your thorough conversion you shall be washed. You shall be sanctified. You shall be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 6, 10 and 11. O every formal professor, you that are but lukewarm and resting in the form of godliness, give over your halting, be a true Christian, be zealous and repent, and then, though you have been in offense to Christ, ye shall be the joy of his heart. And now bear witness that mercy has been offered you.

I call heaven and earth to record against you this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life that you may live. Deuteronomy 30, verse 19.

I can only entreat you and warn you. I cannot otherwise compel you to be happy. If I could, I would.

What answer will you send me with to my Master? Let me speak to you as Abraham's servant in Nahor's family. And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me. Oh, for such a happy answer as Rebekah gave them.

And they said, We will call the damsel and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. O that I exist from you! Why should I, who agonize for your salvation, be your accuser? Why should the passionate pleadings of mercy be turned into horrid aggravations of your obstinacy in addition to your misery? Judging yourselves, do you not think their condemnation will be doubly dreadful? They shall still go on in their sins after all endeavours to recall

them.

Doubtless it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for you. Matthew 11 22-24 Beloved, if you have any pity for your perishing souls, close with the present offers of mercy. If to God that made you have any authority with you, obey his commands and come in.

If you are not despisers of grace, and would not shut the doors of mercy against yourselves, repent and be converted. Let not heaven stand open for you in vain. Let not the Lord Jesus open his doors and bid you buy without money and without price in vain.

Let not his Spirit and his ministers strive with you in vain and leave you now at last unpersuaded, lest a sentence go forth against you. The bellows are burned, the lettuce consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

Jeremiah 6 29-30 Father of Spirits, take the hard in hand that is too hard for my weakness. Do not thou win, though I have done. A word from thy effectual power will do the work.

O thou that hast the key of David, that openest, and no man shutteth, open thou this heart as thou didst Lydia's, and let the King of Glory enter in, and make this soul thy captive. Let not the tempter harden him in delays. Let him not stir from this place, nor take his eyes from these lines, till he resolve to forego his sins and accept life on thy self-denying terms.

In thy name, O Lord God, did I go forth to these labors. In thy name do I close them. Let not all the times that have cost be lost hours.

Let not all the thoughts of the heart and all the pains that have been about them be lost labor. Lord, put thy hand upon the heart of this listener, and send thy Spirit as once thou didst Philip to join himself to the chariot of the eunuch while he was reading the word. And though I should never know it while I live, yet I beseech thee, O Lord God, let it be found it the last day that some souls are converted by these labors.

Let some be able to stand forth and say that by these persuasions they were won unto thee. Amen. Amen.

Let him that heareth say Amen. From the book An Alarm to the Unconverted Sinner by Joseph Alain. I'd like to close out this cassette from reading from the book The Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, being a critical explication and paraphrase of the 6th and 7th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans by the Reverend James Frazer, written in 1769.

First, let me read the verses from the King James Version of the Bible, Romans 7.14, and so on. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not.

For what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. A dissertation concerning the general scope and purpose of the latter part of chapter 7, 14 to 25, in order to determine whether it represents the case of a regenerate or unregenerate person, the case of a person under the law, or of one under grace, wherein the particular expressions of that context are explained. Section 1 containing general considerations tending to explain the scope and purpose of this context.

The first consideration arises from the difference in the style and expressions between the former and this latter context. He had been speaking of himself in the past tense, showing how matters had been with them formerly, when under the law, and in his own case representing how it is with persons under the law, who as long as they are so are in the flesh and under the dominion of sin. He now from verse 14 speaks of himself in the present tense.

It naturally occurs to one's mind from this change of the tense that, as formerly he had been showing his own case whilst under the law, so now he shows how things go with him at present, in this state of grace, as he was when he wrote. They would need to bring very cogent reasons who would have us to understand him in a sense so very different from what his expression naturally leads us to. He could easily set forth in plain speech the case of persons unregenerate, as he had done before in this and the preceding chapters, without darkening matters, and making his discourse quite ambiguous by altering his style.

He had in a very plain manner represented from his own past experience the case of persons under the law. What good reason can possibly be given for his becoming obscure now by speaking in the present tense as of himself a person regenerate and under grace? What must be understood of the persons unregenerate and under the law without giving any hint that he so means? It has been said that the apostle does on a number of occasions speak in his own name when he does indeed personate others. Several instances are adduced, some of which cannot be justly so interpreted.

But if it be allowed that on some occasions he does in very few words express the arguments, objections, and reproaches used by others against himself, his doctrine or conduct, yet in every such case the thing evidently appears by the obvious import of the expressions and by the answers immediately subjoined, so that there is not room left for mistaking. But it is quite unlikely that he would continue to speak as of himself through so long a passage, and yet mean it of others all the time, without intimating by any expression or hint that to be his design. Let us now go a little further in observing the variation of the apostle's style and compare his expression here, verses 14 to 25, with what he adds in this and the preceding and following chapters concerning the unregenerate.

These, chapters 16 and 17 and 19 through 20, yielded, that is, presented themselves servants to sin. They yielded their members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, which implies the full and habitual consent of the will. But here, verse 23, there is a law in a man's members warring and bringing into captivity to that which is against the habitual bent and inclination of the man's will.

As to the unregenerate, who after the flesh and in the flesh they are, chapter 8, 7, enmity against God and not subject to His law. But the man in our context, from verse 14, consents to the law that it is good.

Delights in the law of God after the inner man, and with his mind himself serves the law of God.

As to the man in our context, what is holy and good is what he wills. Sin is what he willeth not. But in the context preceding verse 14, where the case of the unregenerate man under the law is certainly set forth, sin does by occasion of the law work in him all manner of concupiscence, deceives him, slays him, and reviving in him destroys all his confidences.

But it is not said of him that he hates it, that it is a thing he would not, nor does he cry out of wretchedness by it, as in the latter context. Those who interpret this latter context of a man in the flesh and under the law do ascribe all the good mentioned in it to the man's understanding, reason, and natural conscience. But those these are in the unregenerate who are certainly meant in the context preceding verse 14, yet in no part of that context are they said to love, to hate, to delight, to will, to serve, as in this, nor in the former context is there any mention of the inner man, of the mind, or of the law of the mind.

The several expressions in the latter context come again in our way to be more particularly explained. I here only observe the variation of the apostle's style and expression upon a general view. The great difference in variation of the style and expression gives good cause to think that from verse 14 there is represented a person in state very different from being under the law in the flesh, as we have here a style and expression never used concerning such.

Number 2 Here we see that the apostle speaks with a special view to the spirituality of the law of God, as it gives rule to a man's heart and spirit within, and to all inward thoughts and motions in the soul. It seems indeed to be clear that it is with this view he speaks all along, even in the preceding context. The motions of sins working in a man's members, verse 5, are inward.

The particular instance specified in verse 7, Thou shalt not covet, is inward. So it is, verse 8, when sin works in a man all manner of concupiscence, and when, verse 9, sin revives. If it were to the practice of sin in outward works and behavior that were meant in that context, certainly what he says would not universally suit the case of persons in the flesh and under the law.

Many such have been outwardly, as to the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. So if the apostle himself was, when, in that state, and in appearance very religious, yea, having much at heart to be so, it had been a too partial, restricted, and incomplete view of the general character of persons in the flesh and under the law. If he had considered and represented only the outward practice, nor would it give a just account of the character in general of persons in the flesh.

Whereas, upon the view we are taking of the apostle's discourse, it answers to that character in state universally. Those in the flesh, as the apostle represents, do mean in their way to serve God, if not in the newness of spirit, yet according to the oldness of the letter. It is so that the distinction is stated, verse six, not that the one sort serve God, and the other sort do not intend to serve them at all.

If those in the flesh have their unholiness and unholy lustings and affections, which in many of them break forth outwardly in much impurity and iniquity, yet they have also their carnal religion and their carnal confidence founded upon it. If the impurities and iniquity of the flesh have fearfully prevailed in the world, a carnal religion in one form or other has, no less, overspread the world. But what the apostle does, verse fourteen, where he begins to speak of himself in the present tense, mention expressly that the law is spiritual, it serves as a key to the following context, with which that expression and assertion is more precisely connected.

Now, it is not only that its nature and heart had been, as to its inward workings, in the utmost rebellious and unholy opposition to the law in its unregenerate state, but, as if he had said, when I consider the law in this point of view as it is spiritual, alas, I am, yet I am still, carnal, even in my present more comfortable state. Alas, what of impurity and iniquity remains inwardly with me? If he had considered the law as a role only to the outward actions and behavior, he might at any rate say that it is holy, just, and good, but might easily at the same time think himself likewise holy, just, and good. But when he views the law as spiritual, he finds great opposition and disconformity to its holiness to observe with sorrow, even now in its better state under grace.

When he considers that the law requires not only the external acts of worship, but also requires a worshiping of God in spirit and in truth, that it not only requires the external acts of obedience, but also demands to love God sincerely, yea, intensely, to the utmost of our faculties and powers, with all our might and strength, that it not only prohibits outward acts of impurity and iniquity, but also prohibits all deviation of the heart from God and from holiness, by evil lusting inwardly, that it not only requires all outward duty to our neighbor, including our enemies, but also that our heart inwardly be sincerely well affected to him, that not only killing a man, but also being angry at him without a cause is a transgression of the sixth commandment, that not only the outward act of adultery, but also to look on a woman to lust after her is a transgression of the seventh, it is, I say, considering the law as thus spiritual, thus giving will to his heart and spirit within him, and prohibiting the inward motions and activity of sin, and comparing himself in the inward motions and inclinations of his heart with the strict holiness and spirituality of it, that he represents his present feelings and observation concerning himself as he does. It has been argued by some that whatever may pass inwardly in the heart, even of a true Christian, yet the expressions of this context convey more than what is merely inward, even the doing of evil in the ordinary outward course and practice of life, which is certainly inconsistent with a state of grace. It has been said that the three words here rendered to do or to perform can be understood of no less than external work, action and course, but this is not so clear or evident.

Not to enlarge more than is needful on this point, it is enough to observe in general that in all languages commonly the actions and operations of the mind are very often expressed by words which do primarily signify bodily action or operation in general or bodily sensation. So although the words mentioned should be allowed to be used most commonly concerning outward doing or work, it does not follow that the operations of the mind may not be, yet are not often, meant by them in the use of speech. It is likewise to be observed that in this same chapter, verse 8, the apostle says, Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, where it is plain that the word respects the motions and lustings of sin inwardly.

So there is nothing here to disprove the account given of the apostle's view with regard to the spirituality of the law. Men's overlooking the apostle's view in respect to the law as spiritual and to the disconformity of his heart to what the law requires in this respect, and considering all the accounts here given by him as respecting the outward ordinary practice, has, I apprehend, been a main cause of their falling in with the notion that though he speaks of himself in the present tense, yet he must be understood as personating unregenerate persons. Number 3. The third general consideration I suggest is this.

The more holy a person is, and the more his heart is truly sanctified, it is reasonable to suppose he will have the more quick sense and painful feeling of what sin may remain in him, that he will utter his complaint of it in the more strong expressions and with a greater bitterness of heart. A dirty person who has been commonly employed in the dunghill can be filthy all over without any uneasiness, whereas it is a person of more delicate breeding and manners, much shame and uneasiness to observe a small spot of

filth upon himself. An unregenerate person who is in a course of impurity and iniquity, like a sow wallowing in the mire, that is a Scripture similitude, his sins give him little or no uneasiness, not even the unholiness of his outward practice, much less the unholiness of his heart.

There is a notable difference between the sense of things the two sorts of persons entertain and often express. Such an unregenerate person, as I have mentioned, however freely he takes his course in ill practice, will often give favorable accounts of himself for an honest heart, for certain praiseworthy qualities and good deeds, will often represent himself as righteous and say such things of himself as, according to their true import and meaning, can suit only righteous persons and those truly regenerate. When persons truly holy, however pure and fruitful they are in outward behavior, yet, from what they observe of the evil of their hearts, will be heard sometimes to speak of themselves in a style that they seem, at first sight, to suit only the worst of men.

Thus the matter stands on both sides. A person unholy and impenitent focuses his attention on any good thing he can observe with himself, whereby he can in any degree support a favorable opinion of his own state and be somewhat easy in an evil course. On the other hand, a person truly sanctified is ready to overlook his own good attainments, to forget the things that are behind in this respect, and rather consider how far he is behind and defective in holiness, and affixes attention with much painful feeling on his remaining sinfulness, for matter of godly sorrow or serious regret to him.

With a just view of the majesty and holiness of God, he is ready to say with Job, I abhor myself. Most professing Christians will acknowledge that it is very consistent with a state of grace to have much imperfection in holiness and much remaining sinfulness. Upon this view, it is most reasonable to suppose, according to what has been said above, that the further one is advanced in holiness, and the more his heart is truly sanctified, he will have the greater sensibility with regard to sin, and it must give him the more pain and bitterness.

If we might suppose that an angel should find an unholy thought or imagination to spring up in his mind, surely the first view and feeling of it would give him great apprehension and distress, and could not fail to put such a holy being into agonies. Let us but for once make the supposition that the blessed apostle Paul found some sin and unholy affections remaining and stirring in his heart. As he was a person advanced to a very uncommon degree in holiness, it would be the natural consequence that he should express himself concerning the matter in language uncommonly strong and bitter.

Suppose a man to be so holy as to be in the very next degree to perfection, such a person will have a much more quick feeling and bitter complaint of sin than another good man who is yet less holy. Please turn your tapes aside too at this time. There is something here of important consideration and usefulness in dealing with souls serious and sincere.

A Christian says, I have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and methinks I have found my heart undergo a happy change with a powerful determination towards God and holiness. I have thought that I had good evidence of true conversion and of a heart truly regenerated by grace. But then I know that the effect should be to grow in grace, to advance in holiness, and that sin remaining in my heart should become weaker and weaker.

But I find it otherwise. I find grace rather become more weak. And however my outward appointment is regulated by a good conscience and ways of purity and integrity, yet in my heart I feel sin very strong, and rather growing more and more so.

Evil lusts, carnal affections, and disorderly passions are daily stirring, often with great vehemence, and defiling my heart and spirit. Alas, after all I have experienced the divine goodness I have caused to apprehend, that I may be found to have been in a delusion, and that matters may have a fatal issue with me at last. The unholiness of my heart in which grace feels so weak and sin so strong gives me constant regret and sorrow, and the dread of the final consequence sometimes strikes terror through my whole soul.

To consider the case with judgment as it is in the first place, to be acknowledged that a Christian has great cause of serious regret, and to be greatly humbled for his remaining sinfulness, yet it is one thing for sin to be growing more and more strong indeed, it is another and very different thing for his sense of sin to be growing more and more so. If sin was indeed growing more strong in a Christian's heart, he would feel it less, as the increasing strength of sin is always attended with a proportionate hardness of heart and insensibility. When Hezekiah was humbled for the pride of his heart, it is likely that he observed the motions of that evil lust strong in him, and as if it had grown more and more so compared with his former feeling and observation, yet it was now that that lust was truly become weaker, and the real growth of grace appeared in the quick and humbling sense he had of it.

On a former occasion, when he was gratifying his vanity in entertaining the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, the pride of his heart had much influence, yet gave him no annoyance or uneasiness. It was then that the interest of sin was strong and prevailing, and that of grace and holiness weak. There are too many Christians whose sense of sin and of its motions in them is not so great as it ought to be.

This alas comes too often to discover itself in outward instances of unholy conversation and practice. Christians may be assured that a growing sensibility of conscience and heart with respect to sin, outwardly and inwardly, is among the chief evidences of the growth of grace and of good advances in holiness that they are likely to have on this side of heaven. For the more pure and holy the heart is, it will naturally have the more quick feeling of what sin remaineth in it, and it will be taken to just the Ode of Context now before us to consider it in this light.

The last general consideration I suggest is that the expressions here are not used by another concerning a person historically, but by himself in the way of bitter regret and complaint. A man may in this way and in the bitterness of his heart say very strong things concerning himself and his condition, which it were unjust and absurd for another to say of him in giving his character historically, but this will come in our way again. Section 2. That nothing represented in this context Romans 7.14-25 is inconsistent with a state of grace.

The arguments of those who will have the apostle to be here personating others come under this general head that there are a number of things in this context which he could not say or mean of himself, and which are inconsistent with a state of grace. Let us consider the particular things that are observed and alleged to this purpose. The first thing of this sort that is adduced is in verse 14 I am carnal.

To be carnal or to be in the flesh, so it is argued, is a character of a person unregenerate, and under the law, and not applicable to a person in a state of grace as the apostle was. Answer. To be in the flesh can indeed be said of none who are in a state of grace, according to the scriptural use of the expression, but to be in the flesh and to be in some respect carnal are not words convertible or of the same meaning.

They may be and are said to be carnal in particular respects and on a special view who are in a state of grace. Here is a clear instance. The Corinthians, the apostle, addresses his saints and considers his being in Christ.

Yet to them he writes thus, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. For you are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? 1 Corinthians 3 1-3 I know not what can be replied here, if it is not this. The apostle severely blames the Corinthians for being carnal, so that we cannot suppose that he means of himself when he says here, I am carnal.

Yet still his charging the Corinthians, whom he considers the saints and truly in Christ with being carnal, makes out this general point, that persons regenerate may be carnal in particular respects. To be in the flesh denotes persons absolutely unregenerate and destitute of the spirit, as we see Romans 8-9. But as to Christians being charged with carnality in particular respects, this admits of great variety.

The blessed apostle was by no means carnal in the same respect or degree as the Corinthians. He charged them with being so because they could be fed only with milk, had envying strife and divisions among them, and it were that they were but babes in Christ. Though grace was real and sincere in them, it was weak, so the flesh remained strong and little subdued in them.

This was shameful to them and very reprobable. But it was on comparing himself with a much higher standard than that of man, adult, and come to full stature in Christ, even with the strict holiness and spirituality of the law of God, that he here calls himself carnal. This was matter of bitter regret to himself, but was far from that more blameworthy kind and degree that he charges the Corinthians with.

As here speaking to the Corinthians, he states the opposition between spiritual and carnal. Even as to persons each sort in a state of grace, it is plain that he has the same opposition of characters in view as to persons in the same state of grace. If a brother be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such in 1 Galatians 6.1, where it is plain he considers the person overtaken in a fault as carnal, though a brother.

All this is enough to show that his saying I am carnal, though it imports something in its own nature contrary to holiness, yet does not import the man's being in the flesh unregenerate. 2. The next thing objected is in the same verse 14, sold under sin. And the argument for this expression is thus stated.

Anciently, when the regular cartels were not agreed on between powers at war, the prisoners or captives became the slaves of the victors, or being sold by them, the slaves as such as bought them. Sometimes men became slaves by their having of their own will, resigned their liberty, and sold themselves. So in general, this expression sold under sin imports to be a slave of sin, so it is argued.

This cannot be said in any sense or degree of a person regenerate and under grief. On this occasion, some have introduced the expression used concerning Ahab that surely can never be applicable to a regenerate person. But there was none like unto Ahab which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

1 Kings 26.25 To this I answer that the instance of Ahab to begin with that is very improperly adduced to explain or illustrate the expression in our text. In the words quoted, Ahab is represented as singular among ye above the most wicked. The inspired historian says there was none like unto Ahab, and it is to explain this that he adds, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

That is, he wholly abandoned himself to all manner of wickedness in open defiance of the Almighty. Now, if the Apostle should be supposed to be representing in our context the general and common case of

persons unregenerate in the flesh and under the law, can the case of Ahab answer that purpose? Can such things be said of all who are unregenerate? It is plain that the expression used concerning Ahab and that of our text, I am sold under sin, are not of the same import or meaning. If the latter should mean as the former, it would not express the common case and character of persons regenerate or unregenerate under the law or under grace.

As to slavery, there was a great difference according to the different way in which a man came into that state. If in the course of war a man happened to be taken captive, he was unwillingly a slave, regretted his own condition, and truly longed for deliverance, as he might expect it from the future successes of his proper lord. A man having such a disposition and prospect, though captivated for a season, might still justly reckon himself the subject and soldier of the lord, under whose banner he had fought, and solace himself with the prospect of his working his relief.

But if a man peacefully and voluntarily sold himself, he had not the same reason to look for relief, and would be like to live without the hope of it, without being anxious about his condition. It must accordingly be allowed that there is a great difference between a person who, with full determination of heart and will, peacefully yields himself a slave to sin, to the outward and inward practice of it, and a person who, to peer in upright outward behavior, adds yet most solicitude about inward conformity to the strict holiness and spirituality of the law, with an ordinary conflict against everything within him contrary thereto. The former proves himself to be in an unregenerate state.

The latter, with all his bitter and tragical complaint, is not so. Yea, this can suit none other than a person in a regenerate state. As to the instance of Ahab, if instead of its being historically said of him that he sold himself, we had overheard him, or any other such, striking his thigh like Ephraim, and bemoaning himself, saying, Ah, how carnal I am, and sold under sin! It would surely have made a vast difference, which is see cause to judge such a man like Ephraim to be a true penitent, under the full influence of regenerating grace.

In interpreting the language of sorrow and complaint, great allowances to be made, so as not to take strong words rigidly in their most full ordinary meaning, that would make absurd and foolish work of it, who would so interpret it, in many instances that occur in holy writ. In this way, for instance, one might argue and say, Job was certainly an ill, yea, a vile man, for so he testifies of himself, Behold, I am vile. Job 40 verse 4. Job uttered this humble expression on his having got a very affecting view of the divine majesty and holiness.

In like manner, with an eye to the authority and holiness of God revealed in his law, and of the inward purity it required as being spiritual, the apostle cries out, I am carnal, sold under sin. If one overheard a serious upright Christian saying, on some occasion, with much deep regret, as many such have done, Ah, what a slave am I to carnal affections, to unruly passions! How do they carry me away and captivate me? Would he hastily say that this complaint had no foundation at all in truth? Or would he conclude that if it had, this man was truly and absolutely a slave of sin and a person unregenerate? If the apostle's exclamation, Sold under sin, shall be considered in this view, as it certainly ought to be, it is so far from proving the person, who thus speaks to be truly a slave of sin, that it evidently tends to prove the contrary. Number 3. To the expression we have been last considering, verse 14, we may join that other is near akin to it, in meaning, verse 23, I see another law bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.

To be actually brought into captivity to sin, and to be sold under sin, signified much the same thing. So that what has been said of the other expression, verse 14, may be applied to this. We have no cause to think that the apostle was, even in his regenerate state, altogether a stranger to the sudden hurry and surprise of passion.

Such as cannot be without some degree of sin, however soon checked and overcome, yet not so soon that he might observe as much of it as would greatly annoy his holy heart. If we consider things in view, to the third general consideration above suggested, we ought from a heart so sanctified as was that of the apostle Paul, to expect no less in the expression of bitter regret on such accounts. Number 4. A fourth thing that is said to be inconsistent with a state of grace is a will to do good that hath not effect in practice.

Thus, verse 15. What I would that do I not. Verse 18.

To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. And verse 19. The good that I would I do not.

This, say they, cannot be the case of a person in a state of grace, for as such the apostle says, that God worketh in them to will and to do, or perform. This is to come in our way elsewhere hereafter, but as to the purpose of this place, the apostle says, how to perform that which is good I find not. We have not reason to think from this, that it was always so, most commonly so with him.

Nor do the words oblige us to understand him so. Yea, even from the representation here given, it is certain that the person whose case is meant must be supposed to do and to perform a great deal that is good. He saith several times that it is good that he willed to do, and that to will it was present with him.

He saith not that he willed that which was evil, though it is true that he could not do evil without his will being in it in some sort and degree. But as he never says that he willed that which was evil, it implies that such will was not the habitual and prevailing will. But when he mentions oftener than once that he willed that which was good and says that to will so was present with him, he hereby shows that the prevailing habitual inclination and determination of his will was towards good.

Now if it was so, it is certain from the nature of things and from the natural course of things and rational agents that good must have prevailed in his conduct and practice outward and inward. But whatever good he attained or whatever good he performed, yet according to what is been formally said, overlooking his attainment in that way, his attention is fixed with great concern and regret on what he has not attained or performed. Alas, as if he had said, in how many instances does it happen that I do what I allow not, that I do not that which I would, that when to will is present with me, yet how to perform that which is good I find not.

Surely this is very consistent with the prevailing of grace in the heart. The truth is serious Christians are so much often in this way, and thus expressing their complaint, that if one was to form a character of them according to what they say in representing this style, it would often be more unfavorable than just. Further, we are to remember that the apostle has in his eye all along what at first setting out and speaking of himself in the present tense he had mentioned, verse 14, even the spirituality of the law as a rule not only to his outward behavior, but also to his heart and spirit within him.

If with this in view he should say, to will, even the absolute perfection and purity which the law of God requires is present with me, but how to perform that which is good according to the strict holiness and

spirituality of the law I find not. Alas, I find not in any instance whatsoever will any say that this is inconsistent with the state of grace. Let us consider what is likely to have been the aim, the will, and wish so holy a person, a will that the love of God should fill his heart and prevail in it in the most intense degree, that his heart should be holy, spiritual, and heavenly in all its thoughts and affections, that when he came before God in exercises of worship his whole soul should be animated and elevated with the heavenly flame of devotion, that vain thoughts, sin, and sinful imperfection should never hold him short of such perfect attainment in his duty.

Will any say it is unreasonable to suppose this to be what he willed? Or can any good reason be given for supposing that Paul, whilst he was in the body, found nothing that made him fall short of so high an aim in holiness? Let it be added here when the apostle says, verse 18, How to perform that which is good I find not, that the word rendered performed is a word which, though it may sometimes mean no more than simply to do, as has been shown formerly, yet it more properly signifies to do thoroughly or completely. The apostle, having the strict holiness and spirituality of the law in his eye, will to do what is good thoroughly and completely, as in the outward work, so in his heart and spirit within him. But after all that the Christian attains, there is something as to doing thoroughly and completely that he does not reach in this life.

There is not a just man that does good and sins not. There is still imperfection, something of sins that cleaves to men's best doings, so that in view to the proper standard and rule, the best may say, according to Isaiah 66.6, that even all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The common case of Christians is according to Galatians 5.17, a flesh lusteth against a spirit, and the spirit against a flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These considerations account for the apostle saying, How to perform that which is good I find not, and show that therein there is nothing inconsistent with being regenerate and under grace, and nothing to give cause to think that the apostle personates the unregenerate man. Number 5. Some have argued from that expression, verse 20, sins that dwelleth in me. Is a sin dwelling in a man signifies its ruling, or having dominion in him? But if a man dwells in this city, or in that country, and it is so said, does indeed the expression import that he rules in that city or country? It is plain that the word dwell does not of itself import rule or dominion, and that there is good reason for the distinction between sin reigning in men, as it does in the unregenerate, and sin merrily dwelling in them, as it does in them who are regenerate.

If the apostle meant to represent here persons unregenerate, he had a fair occasion to make the matter clear by that one word, by saying, instead of dwelling, sins that ruleth, or have dominion in me. But it is not so, but uses a word that has no such meaning. Number 6. It is likewise argued that there is something inconsistent with a regenerate state in the expression, verse 24, O wretched man that I am.

But though a man who is regenerate is happy on the whole, yet such a man may be wretched in several respects, and may complain bitterly of being so. If a good Christian in the distressing paroxysm of a chronical disease of gout or gravel should cry out, O wretched man that I am, or if Job in his great distress had used these very words as he used very strong ones, it were surely rash and foolish to conclude that he was unregenerate and not under grace. A sanctified heart conscious of the motions of sin in itself is certainly no less cause to cry out of wretchedness.

Number 7. Some have argued from that expression in this same verse, 24, who shall deliver me, as if it implied despair, which is inconsistent with a state of grace. As to this, it will be allowed that final absolute

despair is so. But we must not judge so of the suggestions of despair, even when these are uttered in strong terms from the force of temptation.

There are not lacking instances of this sort in Scripture in the case of some of the saints. But the Apostle's expression here does not amount even to so much. It expresses the painful feeling he had of sin, the great difficulty he had found in overcoming it, and that it required the hand of one more powerful than himself, together with his solicitude, his most vehement desire and longing to be delivered.

That there is no despair appears in the words he utters as with the same breath, I thank my God through Jesus Christ. Thus I have considered all that I have observed to be adduced with any color from the Apostle's words as inconsistent with a state of grace, and I think it may by this time be reckoned very clear that none of these things in particular, nor the whole together, are so. Section 3, showing that this context contains a great deal that is inconsistent with an unregenerate state.

I come now to show that in the case here represented there is much that is inconsistent with an unregenerate state, and such as none else than a true believer under grace and regenerated is capable of. To this purpose, a general appearance has something at first sight very striking. I mean the bitter complaint there is all along of sin dwelling in the man or in his flesh.

I am carnal, sold under sin. Taking this as a language of bitter and heavy complaint, as it is evidently, what unregenerate man has such a sense of sin prevailing in him as would produce in sincerity such a complaint? Or if the unregenerate man has right sentiments in his head, what man in this state has so sad an impression of the case in his heart? How sad the impression! Verse 24 O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? As to this last expression, this body of death, some have understood it of the body properly so called. But however well the apostle knew it was better for him to depart and to be with Christ, yet amidst all his distresses in the body we never find him wishing or crying out to be disunited from the body, or to be by such an event withdrawn from the service of Christ and of his church on earth.

Much less is it congruous to suppose an unregenerate man who is said to be here personated, crying out for death in order to be without sin. No such man was ever so weary of sin or had such a prospect respecting it for fatuity as to wish and cry out for his dissolution on such an account. But as has been said formally, the body of death in this 24th verse is likely to mean the same thing as the body of sin, chapter 6, 6, and shows how bitter and sad the sense of sin is in the man who cries out as in this place.

I know that an unregenerate man may in great terror of the penal consequence of sin loudly complain of it, but it is not sin itself but the penal consequence that is bitter to such. I know also that a person who labors to establish his own righteousness, which is in great opposition to God and to the sincerity of holiness, may have much vexation and much discouragement to that sort of hope by sin, but that sin itself, for the evil it has in its own nature and its contrariety to God, to duty, to holiness, in view to the spirituality of the law, should be so bitter to a man as quite remote from the disposition of such a self- righteous, unregenerate soul. To be more particular, he says, verse 15, that which I do I allow not.

The Greek word rendered allow is not the same that is so rendered, chapter 14, 22. The word here is what I know not, but as this more common meaning of the word does not suit this place, it is fit to take another meaning that is not uncommon in Scripture used by which the word signifies to love. So the Lord knows that is love's way of the righteous, Psalm 1 6. I never knew that is loved, or had complacence in you.

Depart from me, Matthew 7 23. Thou is known, or has loved, or testifies I love to my soul in adversity, Psalm 31 7. I am the good shepherd, and know that is love my sheep, and am known that is loved of mine, John 10 14. This sense well suits our text, that which I do I allow, or know not, that is love not, Romans 7 15.

For what in the last clause of the first he opposes to this is not mere disapprobation, but hatred. What I hate that I do. So it expresses here that sin he loved not, he hated it.

This is emphatic. Nature did spontaneously, and with strong inclination, produce emotions of sins. The flesh, depraved nature, produced irregular unholy passions and lusts, which he understood by the spirituality of the law to be sin.

But by the fixed, deliberate, and prefelling disposition of his sanctified heart, he loved it not. He hated it. What nature or the flesh produces in the manner that has been said, be in what, by the prefelling disposition of his heart, he would not, he infers, verse 16, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Ascent and consent do differ. The former is of the understanding, respecting truth, which is his proper object. The latter is of the heart and will, respecting good, which is the special object of the will.

Now the word is here used expressly with relation to good, that the law is good, which is the object of the will, and it is from the inclination of his will. If I do that which I would not, that he makes the inference, I consent unto the law that it is good. This however, does not suit the disposition and prefelling principles of the unregenerate.

Let such argue and rational theory ever so much for the goodness of the law, and ascend to all that can be said to that purpose, yet the heart and will do not consent to the law that it is good. It commands what is good for me to do. Comes from mere theory to doing, the heart and will give it against the holy and spiritual law, and every unholy lust, inordinate affection, and irregular passion has a consent to the will to the goodness of itself, and it has its course inwardly, in opposition to the holiness of the law, even when there may be great restraint from various causes and means as to outward practice.

The apostle says, verse 17, Now then it is no more I that do it, but sins that dwelleth in me. What here would strike every man free of bias, is that this I, on the side of holiness against sin, is the most prefelling, and what represents the true character of the man, and that sin which he distinguishes from this I, is not the prevailing reigning power in the man here represented, as it is, however, in every unregenerate man. Further, we see all along in this context the man's will is represented as on the side of duty and holiness and against sin.

It is true that sin cannot do or affect anything without having a will and affections in its interest in some degree. Yet he never says here that sin or evil is the thing that he wills, but still what he wills not. Often is he mentions willing and sin and doing, yet he never mentions his willing as on the side of sin.

That is still what he would not. How shall we account for this but by saying that the will to duty and holiness is prevailing, and his will is habitually on that side, which cannot be the case with a man in the flesh under the dominion of sin? He says, verse 18, To will is present with me. That is to will what is good and holy, and thus it is with him habitually.

This can import no less that the will to holiness and to the very perfection thereof is habitually ready with him. He says indeed, verse 21, I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. So it was,

the flesh remaining in him, sin was its natural production.

It was spontaneous and ready on the side of sin, ever ready to avoid and resist every holy thought, motion, or action, yet sin was not what he willed. It was against a deliberate, fixed inclination and determination of its will, and so was not the dominant principle in him, as it is in all who are in the flesh. Sin could not be dominant in him without having the prevailing inclination of the will favorable to it.

But here there is no hint given of this concerning the will. If the natural man, destitute of the Holy Spirit, can sincerely will, love, delight, and hate, as is here said, I would wish to know what is left for divine grace to do in regeneration. What but external revelation and moral suasion, well inculcated to give the proper excitement to the more languid will, inclination, and affection towards holiness, which a man in nature has, from that rational nature itself, these may exert themselves with due activity and force.

This is divine grace, and the human will consenting to this suasion so exerting itself in practice is, according to them, regeneration. Moral suasion must indeed have its own place in dealing with rational creatures. They are not dealt with as stocks or stones under the hand of the mechanic.

Conversion to God through Jesus Christ into holiness is a consequence of proper evidence and of proper motives. Conversion is the effect of suasion, but not of that merrily. Suasion is not of itself a cause adequate to such an effect in sinful men.

In using that suasion, and that the proper evidence and motives should have effect on the hearts of men, there is need for the immediate operation and influence of divine power and grace on the hearts of men, not to work on them as a mechanic does on a stock or a stone, as some men foolishly speak in arguing against the doctrine of grace, but with a much greater efficacy of power, by which God quickens the dead, gives sight to the blind, or causes the lame to walk, which are similitudes as Scripture affords respecting this subject. The minds of men are spiritually so blind as to be incapable of perceiving in a just light the evidence and excellency of spiritual things, their hearts so possessed by sin that they cannot be duly affected or excited by the best motives until, of divine mercy, they are saved from the prevailing influence and effect of sin, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. If it were not so, how could it happen that on so great a part of mankind, yea, of the wise and prudent, whose intellectual faculties have been highly improved with respect to other subjects, yet the best evidence and motives set before them by the gospel have no effect for their good and salvation when these things are happily and effectually revealed to babes? The gospel has effect beyond what the law ever has, not merely by its better light and means of suasion, but especially as it is a ministration of the Spirit, and that thereby is conveyed into the souls of men the Holy Spirit to give efficacy to its suasion, to enlighten, convert, and sanctify.

To say that without this men in their natural condition can have their will truly inclined to holiness, and can delight in the holy and spiritual law of God, is to depreciate grace and to feed nature with delusion. It is true, indeed, that a sincere Christian may occasionally be so much under the influence of the flesh as to be thereby unable to perform what he habitually wills and wishes, yea, so as to be much ensnared in evil, and God who works in Christians to will and to do of his good pleasure may leave him in some instances thus to prove his weakness, for making him more humble, watchful, and dependent. But to say that a man can sincerely and habitually have his will well affected to God and holiness, with a true hatred of sin, and not habitually and commonly perform that which is good, is quite contrary to the nature of things.

The sincere Christian willing that which is good, does also in practice perform it in a manner that the unregenerate man is incapable of, and notwithstanding the imperfection of his doing, he is therein accepted through Jesus Christ. This has been a reading from the book Sanctification by James Frazer

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