

The Attributes of God

by Thomas Watson

God is infinite in all places, present in all places at once, and has a perfect and infallible knowledge of all things.

Scripture: Psalm 147:5, Daniel 2:28, Malachi 3:6, Acts 4:27, Romans 9:11, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Ephesians 1:1

Topics: "Gods Attributes", "Divine Nature"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the attributes of God, focusing on His omnipresence, immutability, eternity, and wisdom. He highlights God's infinite presence in all places at once, His unchanging nature and eternal existence, and His perfect wisdom displayed in creation and redemption. Watson emphasizes the comfort and assurance found in God's unchangeable decrees and the intricate workings of His wisdom in the salvation of sinners.

Transcript

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

From Thomas Watson's "Body of Divinity"

The OMNIPRESENCE of God

God is infinite. All created beings are finite. The Greek word for "infinite" signifies "without bounds or limits." God is not confined to any place. He is infinite, and so is present in all places at once. His center is everywhere. "In no place is God's Being either confined or excluded," Augustine. "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain you." The Turks build their temples open at the top, to show that God cannot be confined to them--but is in all places by his presence. God's essence is not limited either to the regions above, or to the terrestrial globe--but is everywhere. As philosophers say of the soul, "the soul is in every part of the body," in the eye, heart, foot; so we may say of God, his essence is everywhere; his circuit is in heaven, and in earth, and sea, and he is in all places of his circuit at once. "This is to be infinite." God, who bounds everything else, is himself without bounds. He sets bounds to the sea, "Hitherto shall you come, and no further!" He sets bounds to the angels; they, like the cherubim, move and stand at his appointment, but he is infinite, without bounds. He who can span the heavens, and weigh the earth in scales, must needs be infinite!

Vorstius maintains that God is in all places at once--but not in regard of his essence; but by his virtue and influence: as the body of the sun is in heaven, it only sends forth its beams and influences to the earth; or

as a king, who is in all places of his kingdom authoritatively, by his power and authority--but he is personally on his throne.

God, who is infinite, is in all places at once, not only by his influence--but by his essence; for, if his essence fills all places, then he must needs be there in person. Jer 23:34. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?"

But does not God say that heaven is his throne?

It is also said, that a humble heart is his throne. The humble heart is his throne, in regard to his gracious presence; and heaven is his throne, in regard to his glorious presence; and yet neither of these thrones will hold him, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him.

But if God is infinite in all places--he is in impure places, and mingles with impurity.

Though God is in all places, in the heart of a sinner by his inspection, and in hell by his justice--yet he does not mingle with the impurity, or receive the least tincture of evil. "The divine nature does not intermix with created matter, nor is contaminated by its impurities," Augustine. No more than the sun shining on a dunghill is defiled, or its beauty spotted; or than Christ going among sinners was defiled, whose Godhead was a sufficient antidote against infection.

God must needs be infinite in all places at once, not only in regard to the simplicity and purity of his nature--but in regard to his power, which being so glorious, who can set bounds to him, or prescribe him a circuit to walk in? It is as if the drop should limit the ocean, or a candle set bounds to the sun.

Use one: If God is infinite, present in all places at once, then it is certain he governs all things in his own person, and needs no proxies or deputies to help him to carry on his government. He is in all places in an instant, and manages all affairs both in the earth and heaven. A king cannot be in all places of his kingdom in his own person, therefore he is forced to govern by deputies and viceregents, and they often pervert justice. But God, being infinite, needs no deputies, he is present in all places, he sees all with his own eyes, and hears all with his own ears; he is everywhere in his own person, therefore is fit to be the judge of the world; he will do everyone right.

Use two: If God is infinite by his omnipresence, then see the greatness and immenseness of the divine majesty! What a great God do we serve! "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the glory, and the majesty, and you are exalted as head above all." Well may the Scripture display the greatness of his glory, who is infinite in all places. He transcends our weak conceptions; how can our finite understanding comprehend him who is infinite? He is infinitely above all our praises. "Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." Oh what a poor nothing is man, when we think of God's infiniteness! As the stars disappear at the rising of the sun, oh, how does a man shrink into nothing, when infinite majesty shines forth in its glory! "The nations are as a drop in the bucket, or the small dust of the balance!" On what a little of that drop are we individuals! The heathen thought they had sufficiently praised Jupiter when they called him great Jupiter. Of what immense majesty is God, who fills all places at once!

Use three: If God is infinite, filling heaven and earth, see what a full portion the saints have. They have him who is infinite for their portion! His fullness is an infinite fullness; and he is infinitely sweet, as well as infinitely full. If a cup is filled with wine, there is a sweet fullness--but still it is finite; but God is a sweet fullness, and it is infinite. He is infinitely full of beauty and of love. His riches are called unsearchable, because they are infinite, Eph 3:8. Stretch your thoughts as much as you can, there is that in God which

exceeds; it is an infinite fullness. He is said to do abundantly for us, above all that we can ask. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us," Ephesians 3:20. What can an ambitious person ask? He can ask crowns and kingdoms, millions of worlds; but God can give more than we can ask, nay, more than we can imagine, because he is infinite!

We can imagine--what if all the dust were turned to silver--what if every flower were a ruby--what if every sand in the sea a diamond; yet God can give more than we can imagine, because he is infinite. Oh how rich are they who have the infinite God for their portion! Well might David say, "Surely I have a delightful inheritance!" Psalm 16:6.

We may go with the bee from flower to flower--but we shall never have full satisfaction until we come to the infinite God! Jacob said: "I have enough!" In the Hebrew it is, "I have all!" because he had the infinite God for his portion! Gen 33:11. God being an infinite fullness, there is no fear of lack for any of the heirs of heaven. Though there are millions of saints and angels, who have a share in God's riches--yet he has enough for them all, because he is infinite! Though a thousand men behold the sun--there is light enough for them all. Put ever so many buckets into the sea--there is water enough to fill them. Though an innumerable company of saints and angels are to be filled out of God's fullness--yet God, being infinite, has enough to satisfy them. God has land enough to give to all his heirs. There can be no lack, in that which is infinite.

Use four: If God is infinite, he fills all places, and is everywhere present. This is dreadful to the wicked. God is their enemy, and they cannot escape him, nor flee from him, for he is everywhere present! They are never out of his eye, nor out of his reach. "Your hand shall find out all your enemies." What caves or thickets can men hide in--that God cannot find them? Go where they will, he is present. "Where shall I flee from your presence?" If a man owes a debt to another he may make his escape, and flee into another land, where the creditor cannot find him. "But where shall I flee from your presence?" God is infinite, he is in all places; so that he will find out his enemies and punish them!

But is it not said that "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord?" Gen 4:16.

The meaning is, he went out from the church of God, where the visible signs of God's presence were, and where God in a special manner manifested his sweet presence to his people; but Cain could not go out of God's sight; for God being infinite is everywhere present. Sinners can escape from neither an accusing conscience, nor from a revenging God!

Use five: If God is everywhere present, then for a Christian to walk with God is not impossible. God is not only in heaven--but he is in earth too. Heaven is his throne, there he sits; the earth is his footstool, there he stands. He is everywhere present, therefore we may come to walk with God. "Enoch walked with God." If God was confined to heaven, a trembling soul might think, "How can I converse with God, how can I walk with him who lives above the upper region?" But God is not confined to heaven; he is omnipresent; he is above us--yet he is about us, he is near to us. "He is not far from each one of us." Acts 17:27. He is not far from the assembly of the saints, "God has taken His place in the divine assembly," Psalm 82:1. He is present with us, God is in everyone of us; so that here on earth we may walk with God.

In heaven the saints rest with him, on earth they walk with him. To walk with God is to walk by faith. We are said to "draw near to God," Heb 10:22, and to see him, Heb 11:27, "As seeing him who is invisible," and to have fellowship with him. 1 John 1:3, "Our fellowship is with the Father." Thus we may take a turn

with him every day by faith. It is slighting God not to walk with him. If a king was in our presence, it would be slighting him to neglect him, and play with the pet. There is no walk in the world so sweet as to walk with God. "They shall walk in the light of your countenance." "Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord." It is like walking among beds of spices, which send forth a fragrant perfume.

Use six: If God is infinite in his glorious essence, learn to admire--where you cannot fathom. The angels wear a veil, they cover their faces, as adoring this infinite majesty. Isa 6:6. Elijah wrapped himself in a mantle when God's glory passed by. Admire--where you cannot fathom. "Can you by searching find out God?" Here on earth, we see some beams of his glory, we see him in the looking-glass of the creation; we see him in his picture--his image shines in the saints. But who can search out all his essential glory? What angel can measure these pyramids? "Can you by searching find out God?" He is infinite. We can no more search out his infinite perfections, than a man upon the top of the highest mountain can take a star in his hand! Oh, have God-admiring thoughts! Adore where you cannot fathom!

There are many mysteries in nature which we cannot fathom; why the sea should be higher than the earth--yet not drown it; why the Nile should overflow in summer, when, by the course of nature, the waters are lowest. "As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things." Ecclesiastes 11:5. If these things perplex us, how may the infinite mystery of the Deity transcend our most raised intellectuals! Ask the geometrician, if he can, with a ruler, measure the heavens. Just so--we are unable are we to measure the infinite perfections of God. In heaven we shall see God clearly--but not fully, for he is infinite. He will communicate himself to us, according to the capacity of our vessel--but not the immenseness of his nature. Adore then where you cannot fathom!

If God is infinite in all places, let us not limit him. "They limited the Holy One of Israel." It is limiting God to confine him within the narrow compass of our reason. Reason thinks God must go such a way to work, or the business will never be effected. This is to limit God to our reason; whereas he is infinite, and his ways are past finding out. In the deliverance of the church, it is limiting God, either to set him a time, or prescribe him a method for deliverance. God will deliver Zion--but he will be left to his own liberty; he will not be tied to a place, to a time, or to an instrument, which were to limit him, and then he should not be infinite. God will go his own way, he will confound human reason, he will work by improbabilities, he will save in such a way as we think would destroy. Now he acts like himself, like an infinite wonder-working God. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Romans 11:33.

The KNOWLEDGE of God

"The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Glorious things are spoken of God; he transcends our thoughts, and the praises of angels. God's glory lies chiefly in his attributes, which are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth. Among other of his orient excellencies, this is not the least--"the Lord is a God of knowledge;" or as the Hebrew word is, "A God of knowledges." He has a full idea and cognisance of all things; the world is to him a transparent body. He makes a heart-anatomy. "I am he who searches the thoughts and the heart." The clouds are no canopy, the night is no curtain--to draw between us and his sight. "Even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you."

There is not a word we whisper but God hears it. "There is not a word in my tongue--but lo, O Lord, you know it altogether." There is not the most subtle thought that comes into our mind--but God perceives it. "I know their thoughts." Thoughts speak as loud in God's ears--as words do in ours. All our actions, though ever so subtly contrived, and secretly conducted, are visible to the eye of Omniscience. "I know their works." Achan hid the Babylonish garment in the earth--but God brought it to light. Minerva was drawn in such curious colors, and so lively pencilled, that whichever way one turned, Minerva's eyes were upon him. Just so, whichever way we turn ourselves, God's eye is upon us!

"Him who is perfect in knowledge." God knows whatever is knowable; he knows future contingencies. He foretold Israel's coming out of Babylon, and the virgin's conceiving. By this the Lord proves the truth of his Godhead, against idol gods. "Tell us the coming events, then we will know that you are gods." The perfection of God's knowledge is primary. He is the original, the pattern, and prototype of all knowledge; others borrow their knowledge of him; the angels light their lamps at this glorious sun.

God's knowledge is pure. It is not contaminated with the object. Though God knows sin--yet it is to hate and punish it. No evil can mix or incorporate with his knowledge, any more than the sun can be defiled with the vapors which arise from the earth. God's knowledge is facile; it is without any difficulty. We study and search for knowledge. Prov 2:2. "If you seek for her as for silver." The lamp of God's knowledge is so infinitely bright, that all things are intelligible to him.

God's knowledge is infallible; there is no mistake in His knowledge. Human knowledge is subject to error. A physician may mistake the treatment of a disease; but God's knowledge is unerring. He can neither deceive, nor be deceived. He cannot deceive--because he is truth; nor be deceived--because He has infinite wisdom.

God's knowledge is instantaneous. Our knowledge is successive, one thing after another. We argue from the effect to the cause. God knows things past, present, and to come--at once; they are all before him in one entire prospect.

God's knowledge is retentive; he never loses any of his knowledge; he remembers as well as understands. Many things elapse out of our minds--but God's knowledge is eternalized. Things transacted a thousand years ago, are as fresh to him as if they were done but the last minute. Thus he is perfect in knowledge.

But is it not said, "I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. Then I will know."

It could not be that God was ignorant; because there is mention made of a cry; but the Lord speaks there after the manner of a judge, who will first examine the cause before he passes the sentence. When he is upon a work of justice he is not in a hurry, as if he did not care where he hits; but he goes straight against offenders. "He lays judgement to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."

Hos 13:12, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid." ("The guilt of Ephraim is stored up, his sins are kept on record." NIV translation.)

Not that his sin is hid from God--but his sin is hid; that is--the sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment. That this is the meaning, is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is collected. As the clerk of the court binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and at the trial

brings out the indictments and reads them in court; so God binds up men's sins in a bundle, and, at the day of judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels!

God is infinite in knowledge. He cannot but be so; for he who gives being to things, must needs have a clear inspection of them. "He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see?" He who makes a watch or engine, knows all the workmanship in it. God, who made the heart, knows all its movements. He is full of eyes, like Ezekiel's wheels, and, as Austin says, Totus oculus, "All eye." It ought to be so; for he is the "Judge of all the world." There are so many causes to be brought before him, and so many people to be tried, that he must have a perfect knowledge, or he could not do justice. A human judge cannot proceed without a jury, the jury must search the cause, and give in the verdict; but God can judge without a jury. He knows all things in and of himself, and needs no witnesses to inform him. A human judge judges only matters of fact--but God judges the heart. He not only judges wicked actions--but wicked designs. He sees the treason of the heart, and punishes it.

Use one: Is God infinite in knowledge? Is he light, and in him is there no darkness? Then how unlike are they to God who are darkness, and in whom is no light, who are destitute of knowledge, such as the heathen who never heard of God! And are there not many among us, who are no better than baptized heathen? who need to seek the first principles of the oracles of God. It is sad, that after the sun of the gospel has shined so long in our horizon, that the veil should still be upon their heart. Such as are enveloped in ignorance cannot give God a reasonable service. Rom 12:2. Ignorance is the nurse of impiety. The schoolmen say, "Every sin is founded upon ignorance". Jer 9:3, "They proceed from one evil to another, and they do not take Me into account." Where ignorance reigns in the understanding, lust rages in the affections. Prov 19:2, "That the mind be without knowledge, it is not good." Such have neither faith nor fear: no faith; for knowledge carries the torch before faith. "Those who know your name shall put their trust in you." A man can no more believe without knowledge, than the eye can see without light. He can have no fear of God; for how can they fear him whom they do not know? The covering of Haman's face was a sad presage of death. When people's minds are covered with ignorance, it is a covering of the face, which is a fatal forerunner of destruction. "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding-trough, but Israel does not know; My people do not understand." Isaiah 1:3

Use two: If God is a God of infinite knowledge, then see the folly of hypocrisy. "Hypocrites do not actually do good, they merely make a show of it," Melancthon. They carry it fair with men--but care not how bad their hearts are; they live in secret sin. "They say--How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Psalm 73:11. "What does God know? Can He judge through thick darkness?" Job 22:13 "God has forgotten, he hides his face, he will never see it." But, "His understanding is infinite!" He has a window to look into men's hearts! He has a key to open up the heart; he beholds all the sinful workings of men's spirits, as in a glass bee-hive we can see the bees working in their combs. Matt 6:6, "Your Father who sees in secret." God sees in secret. As a merchant enters debts in his book, so God has his debt-book, in which he enters every sin. Jeroboam's wife disguised herself, so that the prophet would not know her; but he discerned her. "When Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called out--Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else? I have bad news for you!" 1 Kings 14:6. The hypocrite thinks to disguise and juggle with God--but God will unmask him. "God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing." "For they have done outrageous things in Israel; they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and in my name have spoken lies, which I did not tell them to do. I know it and am a witness to it--declares the Lord." Jeremiah 29:23

Ay--but the hypocrite hopes he shall color over his sin, and make it look very good. Absalom masks over his treason with the pretense of a religious vow. Judas cloaks his envy at Christ, and his covetousness, with the pretense of "charity to the poor." Jehu makes religion a cloak for his selfish design. But God sees through these fig-leaves! You may see a jade under his guilt trappings. "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. Jeremiah 16:17. He who has an eye to see--will find a hand to punish!

Use three: Is God so infinite in knowledge? Then we should always feel as under his omniscient eye. "We ought to live as if always in full view of God," Seneca. Let us place David's prospect before our eye, "I have set the Lord always before me." Seneca counseled Lucilius, that whatever he was doing, he should imagine some of the Roman nobles stood before him, and then he would do nothing dishonorable. The consideration of God's omniscience would be preventive of much sin. The eye of man will restrain from sin; and will not God's eyes much more? "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes? the king roared." Esther 7:8. Will we sin when our Judge looks on? Would men speak so vainly, if they considered God overheard them?

Latimer took heed to every word in his examination, when he heard the pen go behind the hangings. Just so, what care would people have of their words, if they remembered that God heard, and his pen was writing everything down in heaven? Would people commit immorality, if they believed God was a spectator of their wickedness, and would make them do penance in hell for it? Would they defraud in their dealings, and use false weights, if they knew God saw them, and for making their weights lighter would make their damnation heavier?

Viewing ourselves as under the eye of God's omniscience, would cause reverence in the worship of God. God sees the frame and demeanor of our hearts, when we come before him. How would this call in our straggling thoughts? How would it animate and invigorate duty? It would make us put fire to the incense. We must worship God with the utmost zeal and intensesness of spirit. To think that God is in this place would add wings to prayer, and oil to the flame of our devotion!

Use four: Is God's knowledge infinite? Study sincerity, be what you seem. "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7. Men judge the heart by the actions. God judges the actions by the heart. If the heart is sincere, God will see the faith and bear with the failing. Asa had his blemishes--but his heart was right with God. God saw his sincerity, and pardoned his infirmity. Sincerity in a Christian is like chastity in a wife, which excuses many failings. Sincerity makes our duties acceptable, like musk among linen, which perfumes it. As Jehu said to Jehonadab, "Is your heart right with me? And he said, It is. If it is--give me your hand; and he took him up into the chariot." Just so, if God sees that our heart is right, that we love him, and aim at his glory--he says, "Give me your prayers and tears; now you shall come up with me into the chariot of glory!" Sincerity makes our services to be golden, and God will not cast away the gold, though it may lack some weight. Is God omniscient, and his eye chiefly upon the heart? Wear the belt of truth about you, and never leave it off.

Use five: Is God a God of infinite knowledge? Then there is comfort, (1.) To the saints in particular. (2.) To the church in general.

(1.) Comfort to SAINTS in particular. In case of private devotion. Christian, you set hours apart for God, your thoughts run upon him as your treasure; God takes notice of every good thought. "He had a book of

remembrance written for those who thought upon his name." You enter into your closet, and pray to your Father in secret; he hears every sigh and groan! "My groaning is not hidden from you." You water the seed of your prayer with tears--God bottles every tear! "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book!" Psalm 56:8. When the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, God will make an honorable mention of the zeal and devotion of his people, and he himself will be the herald of their praises. "Then shall every man have praise of God."

The infiniteness of God's knowledge is a comfort, in the case of saints who have not a clear knowledge of themselves. They find so much corruption, that they judge they have no grace. "If it is so--why am I thus? If I have grace, why is my heart in so dead and earthly a frame?" Oh remember, God is of infinite knowledge--he can spy grace where you cannot; he can see grace hidden under corruption, as the stars may be hidden behind a cloud. God can see that holiness in you, which you can not discern in yourself. He can spy the flower of grace in you, though overtopped with weeds. "Because there is some good thing in him." God sees some good thing in His people--when they can see no good in themselves; and though they judge themselves harshly, He will forgive their sins and infirmities!

It is comfort in respect of personal injuries. It is the saints' lot to suffer. The head being crowned with thorns, the feet must not tread upon roses. If saints find a real purgatory, it is in this life; but this is their comfort--that God sees the wrong which is done to them; the pupil of his eye is touched, and is he not sensible of it? Paul was scourged by cruel hands. "Thrice was I beaten with rods;" as if you should see a slave whip the king's son! God beholds it. "I know their sorrows." The wicked make wounds in the backs of the saints, and then pour in vinegar; but God writes down their cruelty. Believers are a part of Christ's mystical body; and for every drop of a saint's blood spilt--God puts a drop of wrath in his vial!

(2.) Comfort to the CHURCH of God in general. If God is a God of knowledge, he sees all the plots of the enemies against Zion, and can make them abortive. The wicked are treacherous, having borrowed their skill from the old serpent! They dig deep, to hide their counsels from God--but he sees them, and can easily counterwork them. The dragon is described with seven heads--to show how he plots against the church; but God is described with seven eyes--to show that he sees all the plots and stratagems of the enemies; and when they deal treacherously, he can easily confound them. "Come," says Pharaoh, "let us deal wisely." But he never more played the fool, than when he thought to deal wisely. "During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army, and threw it into confusion." Exodus 14:24. How may this, like sap in the vine, comfort the church of God in her earthly state! The Lord has an eye in all the councils and machinations of the enemy; he sees them in their efforts, and can blow them up in their own mine!

The ETERNITY of God

The next attribute is, "God is eternal." "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

There are three kinds of beings:

1. Such beings as had a beginning--and shall have an end. Such as all animate creatures--the animals, birds, fish--which at death are destroyed and return to dust. Their being ends with their life.
2. Such beings as had a beginning--but shall have no end. Such as angels and the souls of men, which are eternal once they are brought into existence--they abide forever.

3. Such as is without beginning--and without ending. This is proper only to God. He is from everlasting--to everlasting. This is God's title, a jewel of his crown. He is called "the King eternal." Jehovah is a word that properly sets forth God's eternity. It is a word so dreadful, that the Jews trembled to name or read it; and used Adonai, 'Lord,' in its place. Jehovah contains in it time past, present, and to come. "I am the Alpha and the Omega--says the Lord God--who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8. This verse illustrates the word Jehovah; (who is) he subsists of himself, having a pure and independent being; (who was) God alone, was before time; there is no searching into the records of eternity; (who is to come).

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever!" Psalm 45:6. The doubling of the word ratifies the certainty of it, as the doubling of Pharaoh's dream. His kingdom has no end; his crown has no successors.

I shall prove that God alone could be eternal--without beginning. Angels could not be eternal; they are but creatures, and though spirits--they were created. Therefore their beginning may be known; their antiquity may be searched into. If you ask, when were they created? Some think before the world was; but not so: for what was before time was eternal. The first origin of angels reaches back no further, than the beginning of the world. It is thought by the learned, that the angels were made on the day on which the heavens were made. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Jerome, Gregory, and venerable Bede understand it, that when God laid the foundation-stone of the world, the angels being then created, sang anthems of joy and praise.

It is proper to God only to be eternal, without beginning. He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. No creature can write itself Alpha, that is only a flower of the crown of heaven. Exod 3:14. "I am who I am," that is, "I am the one who always is. I am he who exists from, and to eternity!" "The Lord will reign forever and ever!" Exodus 15:18. "The Lord is King forever and ever!" Psalm 10:16.

Use one: Here is thunder and lightning to the WICKED. "Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever!" Revelation 15:7. God is eternal, therefore the torments of the wicked are eternal! God lives forever; and as long as God lives, he will be punishing the damned! This should be as the handwriting upon the wall, which should have this effect-- "and his face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him." Daniel 5:6. The sinner takes liberty to sin; he breaks God's laws, like a wild beast that breaks over the hedge, and leaps into forbidden pasture; he sins with greediness, as if he thought he could not sin fast enough. "They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed." Ephesians 4:19. But remember, one of God's names is Eternal, and as long as God is eternal he has time enough to reckon with all his enemies. To make sinners tremble, let them think of these three things: the torments of the damned are without intermission, without mixture, and eternal.

(1.) Without intermission. Their pains shall be acute and sharp, and no relaxation; the fire shall not be slackened or abated. "They have no rest day nor night;" like one who has his joints stretched continually on the rack, and has no ease. The wrath of God is compared to a stream of brimstone. Isa 30:33. Why to a stream? Because a stream runs without intermission; so God's wrath runs like a stream, and pours out without intermission. In the pains of this present life, there is some abatement and intermission; the fever abates; after a fit of the stone, the patient has some ease; but the pains of hell are intense and violent. The damned soul never says, "I am now more at ease."

(2.) Without mixture. Hell is a place of pure justice. In this life, God in anger remembers mercy, he mixes compassion with suffering. Asher's shoe was of iron--but his foot was dipped in oil. Affliction is the iron shoe--but mercy is mixed with it; the foot is dipped in oil. But the torments of the damned have no mixture. "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture." No mixture of mercy.

How is the cup of wrath said to be mixed? "For the Lord holds a cup in his hand; it is full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours the wine out in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs!" Psalm 75:8. Yet in the Revelation it is said to be without mixture. It is mixed, that is, it is full of all the ingredients that may make it bitter; the worm, the fire, the curse of God, all these are bitter ingredients. It is a mixed cup--yet it is without mixture; there shall be nothing to afford the least comfort, no mixture of mercy, and so without mixture. In the sacrifice of jealousy, Numb 5:15, no oil was put to it; so, in the torments of the damned, there is no oil of mercy to abate their sufferings.

(3.) Without cessation, eternal. The pleasures of sin are but for a season--but the torments of the wicked are forever! Sinners have a short feast--but a long reckoning! Origen erroneously thought, that after a thousand years, the damned would be released out of their misery; but the worm, the fire, the prison--are all eternal. "The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night." Revelation 14:11. "The torments of hell keep on punishing, they never end," Prosper. Eternity is a sea without bottom and banks. After millions of years, there is not one minute in eternity spent; and the damned must be ever burning--but never consumed, always dying--but never dead. "They shall seek death--but shall not find it."

The fire of hell is such, as multitudes of tears will not quench it; and length of time will not finish it! The vial of God's wrath will be always dropping upon the sinner! As long as God is eternal, he lives to be avenged upon the wicked. Oh eternity! eternity! who can fathom it? Mariners have their plummets to measure the depths of the sea; but what line or plummet shall we use to fathom the depth of eternity? The breath of the Lord kindles the infernal lake, Isa 30:33; where shall we have buckets to quench that fire?

Oh eternity! If all the body of the earth and sea were turned to sand, and all the air up to the starry heaven were nothing but sand, and a little bird should come every thousand years, and fetch away in her bill but the tenth part of a grain of all that heap of sand; what numberless years would be spent before that vast heap of sand would be fetched away! Yet, if at the end of all that time, the sinner might come out of hell, there would be some hope. But that word "Forever" breaks the heart. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever." What a terror is this to the wicked--enough to put them into a cold sweat, to think, as long as God is eternal, he lives forever to be avenged upon them!

Here the question may be asked--Why should sin that is committed in a short time, be punished eternally?

We must hold with Augustine, "that God's judgments on the wicked, may be secret--but never unjust." The reason why sin committed in a short time is eternally punished, is, because every sin is committed against an infinite essence, which nothing less than eternity of punishment can satisfy. Why is treason punished with death--but because it is against the king's person, which is sacred; much more that offence which is against God's crown and dignity is of a heinous and infinite nature, and cannot be satisfied with less than eternal punishment.

Use two: Of comfort to the GODLY. God is eternal, therefore he lives forever to reward the godly. "To those who seek for glory and honor, eternal life." The people of God are now in a suffering condition.

"Bonds and afflictions await me." The wicked are clad in purple, and fare deliciously, while the godly suffer. The goats climb upon high mountains, while Christ's sheep are in the valley of slaughter. But here is the comfort--God is eternal, and he has appointed eternal recompenses for the saints. In heaven are fresh delights, and sweetness without excess. That which is the crown and zenith of heaven's happiness, is--that it is "eternal." Were there but the least suspicion that this glory must cease, it would much eclipse, yes, embitter it; but it is eternal. "An eternal weight of glory."

What angel can span eternity? The saints shall bathe themselves in the rivers of divine pleasure; and these rivers can never be dried up. "At your right hand are pleasures for evermore." This is the highest strain in the apostle's rhetoric, "Forever with the Lord!" In heaven, there is peace without trouble, ease without pain, glory without end; "forever with the Lord!"

Let this comfort the saints in all their troubles; their sufferings are but short--but their reward is eternal! Eternity makes heaven to be heaven! Eternity is the diamond in the ring! Oh blessed day, which shall have no night! The sunlight of glory shall rise upon the soul, and never set! Oh blessed spring, that shall have no autumn, or fall of the leaf. The Roman emperors have three crowns set upon their heads--the first of iron, the second of silver, the third of gold; so the Lord sets three crowns on his children--grace, comfort, and glory. The saints' crown is eternal, "You shall receive a crown of glory which never fades away!" The wicked have a never-dying worm; and the godly a never-fading crown! Oh how should this be a spur to virtue! How willing should we be to work for God! Though we have nothing here on earth, God has time enough to reward his people. The crown of eternity shall be set upon their head!

Use three: Of exhortation. Study eternity. Our thoughts should chiefly run upon eternity. We all wish for something that may delight our mind. If we could have lived, as Augustine says, from the infancy of the world to the world's old age, what is this--compared to eternity? What is time, measured with eternity? As the earth is but a small point, compared to the heavens. Just so, time is scarcely a moment--compared to eternity! And then, what is this poor life which crumbles away so fast? Oh, think of eternity!

Brethren, we are every day traveling to eternity; and whether we wake or sleep--we are going our journey. Some of us are upon the borders of eternity. Oh study the shortness of life--and length of eternity!

More particularly think of God's eternity and the soul's eternity. Think of God's eternity. He is the Ancient of Days, who was before all time. There is a figurative description of God, "As I kept watching, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was white like snow, and the hair of His head like whitest wool. His throne was flaming fire; its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from His presence. Thousands upon thousands served Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was convened, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9-10. His clothing was white like snow, which signifies his majesty. His hair, like the pure wool, signifies his holiness. His title, the Ancient of Days, signifies his eternity.

The thought of God's eternity should make us have high adoring thoughts of God. We are apt to have low, irreverent thoughts of him. "You thought I was such an one as yourself," weak and mortal. But if we would think of God's eternity, when all our power ceases--he is King eternal, his crown flourishes forever, he can make us happy or miserable forever--this would make us have adoring thoughts of God. "The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne." Revelation 4:10. The saints fall down, to signify by that humble posture, that they are not worthy to sit in God's presence. They fall down and they worship him who lives forever

and ever; they do as it were, kiss his feet. They cast their crowns before the throne, they lay all their honor at his feet; thus they show humble adoration to the eternal essence. Study God's eternity, it will make us adore him--where we cannot fathom him.

Think of the soul's eternity. As God is eternal, so he has made us eternal. We are never-dying creatures; we are shortly entering upon our eternal state--either of eternal happiness or eternal misery. Have serious thoughts of this. Say, "O my soul, which of these two eternities is like to be your portion? I must shortly depart hence, and where then shall I go--to which of these eternities, either of glory or misery shall I go?" The serious meditation on the eternal state we are to pass into, would work strongly with us.

(1.) Thoughts of eternal torments, are a good antidote against sin. Sin tempts with its pleasure; but when we think of eternity, it may cool the intemperate heat of lust. Shall I, for the pleasure of sin for a season--endure eternal pain? Sin, like those locusts, Rev 9:7, seems to have on its head a crown like gold--but it has in it a tail like a scorpion, verse 10, and a sting in its tail; and this sting can never be plucked out. Shall I venture eternal wrath? Is sin committed so sweet--as lying in hell forever is bitter? This thought would make us flee from sin, as Moses fled from the serpent!

(2.) The serious thoughts of eternal happiness would very much take us off from worldly things. What are these sublunary things, compared to eternity! They are quickly gone. They greet us--and then take their farewell. But I am to enter upon an everlasting estate; I hope to live with him who is eternal. What then, is the present fleeting world to me? To those who stand upon the top of the Alps--the great cities below are small things in their eyes. Just so, to him who has his thoughts fixed on his eternal state after this life--all these earthly things seem as nothing in his eye. What is the glory of this world? How poor and contemptible, compared with an eternal weight of glory!

(3.) The serious thoughts of an eternal state, either of happiness or misery, should have a powerful influence upon whatever we take in hand. Every work we do promotes either a blessed eternity, or a cursed eternity. Every good action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of happiness. Every bad action sets us a step nearer to an eternity of misery. Oh what influence should the thoughts of eternity have upon our pious duties! It should make us do them with all our might. Duty well performed, lifts a Christian higher towards heaven, and sets a Christian a step nearer to a blessed eternity!

The IMMUTABILITY of God

The next attribute is God's unchangeableness.

"I am the Lord, and I do not change." Malachi 3:6

God is unchangeable in his nature, and in his decree.

I. God is unchangeable in his NATURE.

1. There is no eclipse of his brightness.

2. No end put to his being.

[1] There is no eclipse of his brightness. His essence shines with a fixed luster. "Who does not change like shifting shadows," James 1:17. "You remain the same, and your years will never end," Psalm 102:27. All created things are full of vicissitudes. Princes and emperors are subject to change. Sesostris, an Egyptian

prince, having subdued many kings in war, made them draw his chariot, like horses, as if he intended them to eat grass, as God did King Nebuchadnezzar. The crown has many successors. Kingdoms have their eclipses and convulsions. What has become of the glory of Athens? The pomp of Troy? [Now corn grows, where the great city of Troy once stood]. Though kingdoms have a head of gold, they have feet of clay.

The heavens change. "They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." Psalm 102:26-27. The heavens are the most ancient records, where God has written his glory with a sunbeam--yet these shall change. Though I do not think they shall be destroyed as to their substance--yet they shall be changed as to their qualities; they shall melt with fervent heat, and so be more refined and purified. 2 Peter 3:12. Thus the heavens shall be changed--but not he who dwells in heaven. "I am the Lord, and I do not change."

The best saints have their eclipses and changes. Look upon a Christian in his spiritual estate, and he is full of variation. Though the seed of grace does not die--yet its beauty and activity often wither. A Christian has his aguish fits in piety. Sometimes his faith is at a high tide--and sometimes low ebb; sometimes his love flames--and at another time is like fire in the embers, and he has lost his first love. How strong was David's grace at one time! "God is my rock, in him will I trust." At another time he says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." What Christian can say he does not find a change in his graces; that the bow of his faith never unbends, the strings of his violin never slacken? Surely we shall never meet with such Christians until we meet them in heaven! But God is without any shadow of change.

The angels were subject to change; they were created holy--but mutable. "The angels which kept not their first estate." Jude 6. These morning stars of heaven were falling stars. But God's glory shines with a fixed brightness. In God there is nothing which can change, for better or worse. He cannot change for the better--because then he would not now be perfect. He cannot change for the worse--for then he would cease to be perfect. He is immutably holy, immutably good; there is no shadow of change in him.

But when Christ, who is God, assumed the human nature--was there a change in God?

If the divine nature had been converted into the human, or the human into the divine, there would have been a change--but they were not. The human nature was distinct from the divine nature. Therefore there was no change. A cloud over the sun makes no change in the sun. Just so, though the divine nature is covered with the human nature, it makes no change in the divine nature.

[2] There is no end put to his being. "Who alone has immortality." The Godhead cannot die. An infinite essence cannot be changed into finite; and God is infinite. He is eternal, consequently he is not mortal. To be eternal and mortal is a contradiction.

Use one: See the excellence of the divine nature in its immutability. This is the glory of the Godhead. Mutableness denotes weakness, and is not in God, who is "the same, yesterday, and today, and forever." Men are fickle and mutable, like Reuben, "unstable as water." Men are changeable in their principles. If their faces altered as fast as their opinions--we would not recognize them. Men are changeable in their resolutions; just as the wind that blows in the east, presently turns about to the west. They resolve to be virtuous--but quickly give up of their resolutions. Their minds are like a sick man's pulse, which alters every half hour. The apostle Jude compares them to waves of the sea, and wandering stars. They are not pillars in God's temple--but reeds shaken by the wind. Others are changeable in their friendship. They

quickly love--and quickly hate. Sometimes they will press you to their bosom; later they will excommunicate you out of their favor. They change as the chameleon, into several colors. But God is immutable--he does not change.

Use two: See the vanity of the creature. There are changes in everything, but in God. "Lowborn men are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie; if weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath." Psalm 62:9. We look for more from the creature, than God has put in it. The creature has two evils in it--it promises more than we find--and it fails us when we most need it. A man desires to have his corn harvested--but the rain falls; the mariner is for a voyage--but the wind does not blow, or is contrary; one depends upon another for the payment of a promise, and he fails, and is like a foot out of joint. Who can find a fixed stability in the vain creature? It is as if one should build houses on the sand, where the sea comes in and overflows. The creature is true to nothing but deceit--and is constant only in its disappointments. It is no more astonishing to see changes in the creature, than to see the moon dressing itself in a new shape and figure. Expect to meet with changes in everything, but God.

Use three: Comfort to the godly.

(1.) In case of losses. If an estate, you are almost boiled away to nothing, and if you lose friends by death--there is a double eclipse. But the comfort is--God is unchangeable. I may lose these things--but I cannot lose my God; he never dies. When the fig-tree and olive-tree failed, God did not fail. "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." Flowers in the garden die--but a man's portion remains. Just so, outward things die and change--but "you are the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

(2.) In case of sadness of spirit. God seems to cast off the soul in desertion. "My Beloved had withdrawn himself." Yet, God is unchangeable. He is immutable in his love; he may change his countenance--but not his heart! "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Jer 31:1. Hebrew--a love of eternity. If once God's electing love rises upon the soul--it never sets. "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed--says the Lord, who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:10. God's love stands firmer than the mountains. His love to Christ is unchangeable; and he will no more cease loving believers, than he will cease loving Christ.

Use four: Of exhortation. Get a saving interest in the unchangeable God, then you are as a rock in the sea--immoveable in the midst of all changes.

How shall I get a part in the unchangeable God?

By having a change wrought in you. "But you are washed--but you are sanctified." By this change we are savingly interested in the unchangeable God.

Trust to that God, who alone who is unchangeable. "Cease from man," stop trusting to the reed--but trust to the Rock of ages. He who is by faith engarrisoned in God, is safe in all changes; he is like a boat that is tied to an immoveable rock. He who trusts in God, trusts in that which cannot fail him; for God is unchangeable. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Health may leave us, riches, friends may leave us; "but," says God, "I will never leave you; my power shall support you; my Spirit shall sanctify you; my mercy shall save you! I will never leave you!" Oh trust in this unchangeable God!

God is jealous of two things; of our love, and of our trust. He is jealous of our love, lest we love the creature more than him; therefore he makes it prove bitter. God is jealous of our trust, lest we should place

more confidence in the creature, than in him, therefore he makes it prove unfaithful. Outward comforts are given us as food along the way--to refresh us, not as crutches to lean on. If we make the creature an idol, what we make our trust, God will make our shame. Oh trust in the immortal God! Like Noah's dove, we have no footing for our souls, until we get into the ark of God's unchangeableness. "Those who trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed."

II. God is unchangeable in his DECREE. What he has decreed from eternity is unalterable. "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Isaiah 46:10. God's eternal counsel or decree, is immutable. If he changed his decree, it must be from some defect of wisdom or foresight, for that is the reason why men change their purposes; they see something afterwards, which they did not see before. But this cannot be the cause why God should alter his decree, because his knowledge is perfect--he sees all things in one entire prospect before him.

But is not God said to repent? This seems to be a change in his decree? "The Lord repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them."

Repentance is attributed to God, figuratively. "He is not a man, that he should repent." There may be a change in God's work--but not in his will. He may will a change--but not change his will. "God may change his sentence--but not his decree." A king may cause sentence to be passed upon a malefactor whom he intends to save; so God threatened destruction to Nineveh--but the people of Nineveh repenting, God spared them. Here God changed his sentence--but not his decree; it was what had lain in the womb of his purpose from eternity.

But if God's decree be unchangeable, and cannot be reversed, then to what purpose should we use the means? Our endeavors towards salvation cannot alter his decree.

The decree of God does not affect my endeavor; for he who decreed my salvation, decreed it in the use of means; and if I neglect the means I reprobate myself. No man argues thus: "God has decreed how long I shall live, therefore I will not use any means to preserve my life, I will not eat and drink." As God has decreed the length of my life, in the use of means--so God has decreed my salvation in the use of the Word and of prayer. As a man who refuses food murders himself--just so, he who refuses to work out his salvation destroys himself. The vessels of mercy are said to be prepared unto glory. How are they prepared, but by being sanctified? and that cannot be, but in the use of means. Therefore let not God's decree, take you off from holy endeavors. It is a good saying of Preston, "Have you a heart to pray to God? it is a sign that no decree of wrath has passed against you."

Use one: If God's decree is eternal and unchangeable, then God does not elect upon our foreseen faith, as the Arminians maintain. "The children being not yet born, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was said, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." Romans 9:11, 13. We are not elected for our holiness--but to holiness. Eph 1:1. If we are not justified for our faith, much less are we elected for our faith. We are said to be justified through faith as an instrument--but not for faith as a cause; and, if not justified for faith, then much less elected for faith. God's decree of election, is eternal and unchangeable, and therefore depends not upon foreseen faith. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They were not elected because they believed--but they believed because they were elected.

Use two: If God's decree be unchangeable, it gives comfort in two cases.

(1.) Concerning God's providence towards his church. We are ready to quarrel with Providence, if everything does not accord with our desire. Remember God's work goes on, and nothing happens, but what he has decreed from eternity.

(2.) God has decreed troubles for the church's good. The troubles of God's church, are like the angel's troubling the water, which made way for healing his people. God has decreed troubles in the church. "His fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." The wheels in a watch move contrary to one another--but they all carry on the motion of the watch. Just so, the wheels of Providence often move contrary to our desires--but still they carry on God's unchangeable decree. "Many shall be made white." God lets the waters of affliction be poured on his people--to make them white. Therefore, do not murmur at God's dealings! His work goes on, nothing happens, but what he has wisely decreed from eternity. Everything shall promote God's design, and fulfill his decree.

Use three: Comfort to the GODLY in regard of their salvation. "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal--The Lord knows those who are his." God's counsel of election is unchangeable. Once elected, forever elected. "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." The book of God's decree has no errata in it, no blottings out. Once justified, never unjustified. "Repentance shall be hid from my eyes." Hos 13:14. God never repents of his electing love. "He loved them to the end." Therefore, if you are a believer, comfort yourself with this--the immutability of God's decree.

Use four: To conclude with a word to the WICKED, who march furiously against God and his people--let them know that God's decree is unchangeable. God will not alter it, nor can they break it! While they resist God's will, they fulfill it. There is a two-fold will of God--the will of God's precept, and the will of his decree. While the wicked resist the will of God's precept, they fulfill the will of his permissive decree. Judas betrays Christ, Pilate condemns him, the soldiers crucify him; while they resist the will of God's precepts, they fulfill the will of his permissive decree. "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place." Acts 4:27-28.

God commands one thing, they do the contrary. While they disobey his command, they fulfill his permissive decree. If a man sets up two nets, one of silk, the other of iron, the silken net may be broken, not the iron one. Just so, while men break the silken net of God's command, they are taken in the iron net of his decree; while they sit backward to God's precepts, they row forward to his decrees. God decrees to permit their sin, and then to punish them for their sin permitted.

The WISDOM of God

The next attribute is God's wisdom, which is one of the brightest beams of the Godhead. "He is wise in heart." The heart is the seat of wisdom. Among the Hebrews, the heart is put for wisdom. "Men of understanding," Job 34:34. The Hebrew is "Men of heart." God is wise in heart, that is, he is most wise.

God alone is wise--he solely and wholly possesses all wisdom; therefore he is called, "the only wise God." All the treasures of wisdom are locked up in him, and no creature can have any wisdom but as God is pleased to give it out of his treasury.

God is perfectly wise; there is no defect in his wisdom. Men may be wise in some things--but in other things they show imprudence and weakness. But God is the exemplar and pattern of wisdom, and the pattern must be perfect. "As your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48. God's wisdom appears in two

things:

I. His infinite intelligence.

II. His exact working.

I. His infinite INTELLIGENCE. He knows the most profound secrets. "Our Lord is great, vast in power; His understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5. "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future." Daniel 2:28. He knows the thoughts, which are the most intricate subtle things. "I know full well what you are thinking." Job 21:27. "The Lord knows the thoughts of man." Psalm 94:11. Let sin be contrived ever so secretly, God will pull off all masks and disguises, and make a heart-anatomy. He knows all future contingencies; all things are before him in one clear prospect.

II. His exact and meticulous WORKING. He is wise in heart; his wisdom lies in his works. These works of God are bound up in three great volumes, where we may read his wisdom.

[1] The work of CREATION. The creation is both a monument of God's power, and a looking-glass in which we may see his wisdom. None but a wise God could so meticulously contrive the world. Behold the earth decked with variety of flowers, which are both for beauty and fragrance. Behold the heaven bespangled with lights. We may see the glorious wisdom of God blazing in the sun, twinkling in the stars. His wisdom is seen in marshaling and ordering everything in its proper place and sphere. If the sun had been set lower, it would have burnt us; if higher, it would not have warmed us with its beams. God's wisdom is seen in appointing the seasons of the year. "You have made summer and winter." If it had been all summer, the heat would have scorched us; if all winter, the cold would have killed us. The wisdom of God is seen in chequering the dark and the light. If it had been all night, there would have been no labor; if all day, there would have been no rest. Wisdom is seen in mixing the elements, as the earth with the sea. If it had been all sea, we would have lacked bread; if it had been all earth, we would have lacked water. The wisdom of God is seen in preparing and ripening the fruits of the earth, in the wind and frost which prepare the fruits, and in the sun and rain which ripen the fruits. God's wisdom is seen in setting bounds to the sea, and so wisely contriving it, that though the sea is higher than many parts of the earth--yet it should not overflow the earth. We may cry out with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have you made them all." There is nothing to be seen in this world, but miracles of God's wisdom.

God's wisdom is seen in ordering social things, that one shall have need of another. The poor need the rich man's money, and the rich need the poor man's labor. God makes one trade depend upon another--that one may be helpful to another, and that mutual love may be preserved.

[2] The second work wherein God's wisdom shines forth is the work of REDEMPTION.

(1.) Redemption is the masterpiece of divine wisdom. God has contrived a way for happiness for sinful man--and yet uphold his justice! We may cry out with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" This has astonished men and angels. If God had left us to find out a way of salvation when we were lost--we could neither have had a head to devise, nor a heart to desire--what God's infinite wisdom had planned for us.

Mercy had a mind to save sinners, and was loath that the justice of God should be wronged. "It is a pity," says Mercy, "that such a noble creature as man should be eternally undone; and yet God's justice must

not be a loser. What way then shall be found out? Angels cannot satisfy for the wrong done to God's justice; nor is it fit that one nature should sin--and another nature suffer. What then? Shall man be forever lost?" Now, while Mercy was thus debating with itself, what to do for the recovery of fallen man, the Wisdom of God stepped in--and thus the oracle spoke: "Let God become man; let the Second Person in the Trinity become incarnate, and suffer; and so for fitness he shall be man, and for ability he shall be God! Thus justice may be satisfied, and man saved!" O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God--thus to make justice and mercy to kiss each other! Great is this mystery, "God manifest in the flesh." What wisdom was this--that Christ should be made sin--yet know no sin; that God should condemn the sin--yet save the sinner! Here was wisdom--to find out the way of salvation.

(2.) The means by which salvation is applied--sets forth God's wisdom--that salvation should be by faith, not by works. Faith is a humble grace--it gives all to Christ; it is an adorer of free grace. And free grace being advanced here, God has his glory; and it is his highest wisdom to exalt his own glory.

(3.) The way of working faith--declares God's wisdom. It is wrought by the word preached. "Faith comes by hearing." What is the weak breath of a man--to convert a soul? It is like whispering in the ears of a dead man. This is foolishness in the eye of the world; but the Lord loves to show his wisdom by that which seems folly. "He has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Why so? "So that no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

If God were to convert by the ministry of angels--then we would be ready to glory in angels, and give that honor to them which is due to God; but when God works by weak tools, makes use of men who are of like passions with ourselves, and by them converts, then the power is plainly seen to be of God. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us!" Herein is God's wisdom seen, that no

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