

The Mystical Temple

by Thomas Watson

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the temple as a symbol of God's presence and holiness, and it highlights the importance of preserving spiritual temples and avoiding dangers such as immorality, error, and idolatry.

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Philippians 3:21

Topics: "Spiritual Union", "Temple Purity"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the mystical temple of God, highlighting the spiritual union between Christ and believers using metaphors like the union between the head and the members, and the marital union. He emphasizes that the heart of every believer is God's temple, drawing analogies between a believer's soul and a temple. Watson urges believers to offer spiritual sacrifices like prayer, a broken heart, and praise, and to study temple purity by maintaining holiness. He comforts believers by assuring them of God's constant presence in their lives and the future glory awaiting them as glorious temples in heaven.

Transcript

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"The temple of God is holy, and you are that temple." 1 Corinthians 3:17

It is admirable to observe how the Holy Spirit delights to set forth the spiritual union between Christ and believers by several metaphors. Sometimes this union is shadowed out by the natural union between the head and the members. Christ is called the Head--and believers the body. Sometimes this union is resembled by the marital union. Christ is the Husband--and believers the spouse, by virtue of which marriage-union, all Christ's riches go to them.

In the text, this union is illustrated by the union between the stones in an edifice and the foundation. In the former verses, the Apostle had said that the saints are God's building, verse 9. But here he goes higher and calls them His temple. "The temple of God is holy, and you are that temple." A temple is more than an ordinary building. We must understand this word "temple" by a figure, because a spiritual heart much resembles a temple. Under the law there was

- (1) The outward court of temple where the people stood;
- (2) The inner temple into which none but the priests entered.

In like manner it is with a Christian; there is:

The outward temple of his body. 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." The body is like a temple; the bones may be resembled to the stonework, the blood to the cement, the eyes to the windows, the head to the roof, and the mouth to the door of the temple. What a care we should have to keep our bodies decent, which are the temples of God!

The inward temple of the soul. This is the holy of holies, where none but Jesus Christ our High Priest must come.

In the words are two general parts,

1. The specification of the temple, "you are that temple."
2. The sanctification of the temple, "the temple of God is holy."

DOCTRINE. The heart of every believer is God's temple. 2 Corinthians 6:16, "You are the temple of the living God." Temples are held in great veneration. I shall show several analogies and resemblances between a believer's soul and a temple.

1. All the materials were fitted for the building of the temple. The timber was to be sawn, the stones to be hewn and polished, before they were fit to be laid in the temple. So it is in a spiritual sense. By nature, we are not qualified for a temple; we are unhewn and unpolished --not one good thought, not one grace inherent in us. We are so far from preparing ourselves for a temple, that we unfit ourselves. But God, by His mighty power and artifice, fits the heart for a temple. He hews us by His prophets, Hosea 2:5. He cuts and carves us by afflictions, and so makes us fit for a spiritual temple.

2. The temple was very magnificent. 1 Kings 6:32. It was full of pomp and splendor; all admired it. The Hebrew word for temple signifies a palace or royal edifice. The temple was so carved with flowers and embellished with gold--that it dazzled the eyes of beholders. Just so, the soul of a believer is an illustrious temple; not the kings of the earth--but God Himself brings His glory into it. "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalm 45:13. A saint in rags carries a temple about him, which is more glorious than the most orient pearls and diamonds that hang on the crowns of princes. Christ never admired the goodly stones of the visible temple--but admired the glory of the spiritual temple. Matthew 15:28, "O woman, great is your faith." The beauty of a saint is inward; the hidden man of the heart is sumptuous and magnificent, 1 Peter 3:4.

3. The temple was a place set apart for God's peculiar worship. It was separated from all other places. Just so, a believer's heart is consecrated ground and is set apart for God's service. Psalm 4:3, "The Lord has set apart him who is godly for Himself." A believer is not a common person--but peculiarly devoted to God, Psalm 119:38.

4. The temple was a place of God's special presence. The Lord put His name there; He there commanded His blessings. So, in a spiritual heart, God wonderfully manifests His presence. There He gives forth the influences of His grace, the communications of His love. God visits His temple. Oh, the sweet smiles of

His face, the whispers of His Spirit in a believer's heart! When a Christian is enlarged in duty, and his heart burns within him--here is God's presence in the temple; yes, His answering by fire!

5. The temple was adorned with splendid pictures. So the temple of the heart has God's image in it, Colossians 3:10. This picture is drawn by the pencil of the Holy Spirit. The temple of God is not mortar and stones--but the soul of man bearing God's likeness. This is the lovely picture which adorns the spiritual temple.

6. The temple had a fire burning on the altar. Just so, a believer's heart is the altar on which there is a sacred fire still burning. Romans 12:13, "fervent in spirit." The fire of love is never lacking. Psalm 119:97, "O how I love Your law!" Though the flame may go out--yet there are some sparks kept alive. Christ's temple always has holy fire in it. Wicked men have fire of anger and malice burning in them. This is not the fire of the temple--but strange fire kindled from hell! James 3:6.

7. The temple, being a hallowed place, was to be kept clean. We read of the cleaning of the temple, 2 Chronicles 29:15. There were porters set at the gates of the temple to keep out any unclean thing, 2 Chronicles 23:3. Thus the temple of the heart must be kept clean. 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit." The dust of sin will be falling into this temple; sweep and wash it by repenting tears. Christ whipped the money-changers out of the temple, John 2:14. To these money-changers I compare the cares of the world; these will possess the heart. Now, get a whip made of the threatenings of the law--and drive them out! The temple of the heart, must not be made a worldly marketplace. We may use the world--but look that it is kept out of the heart. None may come to reside in this temple. but Christ!

USE 1. Behold the dignity of the saints--they are God's temples! A sanctified heart is God's illustrious temple. Believers are children of God the Father; members of God the Son; temples of God the Holy Spirit. The foolish world despises the saints--but they are honorable. The temple of a devout heart, is Christ's walkway. Christ is in all the world--in regard of His omnipresence; but only in His spiritual temples--in regard of His gracious presence. The heart of a sinner is a wilderness, and God does not care for walking there. We never read that Christ was in a wilderness but once, and that was not a place of delight--but combat. "He was led there to be tempted of the devil," Matthew 4:1. But Christ was often in the temple, Mark 14:49. He esteems His spiritual temples; He walks with delight among His saints. He says of these temples, as of Zion, Psalm 132:14, "This is My rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

I shall now show wherein this divine temple of the soul, differs from other temples, and has a transcendent excellency above them.

1. Other material temples, though of a beautiful structure--yet have no life in them; but a believer is a living temple. 1 Peter 2:5, "You as living stones are built up a spiritual house." Hypocrites make a show of life; they have a name to live--but are dead, Revelation 3:1. They are not temples--but tombs, who have their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven--but have no life. A believer is a living temple; there is the life of faith in him, Habakkuk 2:4. There are no dead stones in a spiritual temple.

This is a heavenly temple. Other temples are constituted of earthly materials, lead and stone; but the believer is a heavenly temple. His soul was breathed from heaven and that which is in heaven is to be found in him. In heaven there is light, Colossians 1:12; so in a saint there is a light of knowledge, Ephesians 5:8. In heaven there is a love, 1 John 4:7; so a saint's heart is a temple of love, John 21:15. He not only serves God--but loves Him. In heaven there is joy, Matthew 25:23, so a saint has joy in believing,

Romans 15:13. Thus a Christian is a heavenly temple. There is that in him--which is in heaven.

He is an everlasting temple. Other temples are of a perishable nature. King Solomon's temple was of a stately structure--but it had not one stone left upon another. There was a temple at Rome which, by reason of its ancient standing, was called eternal--but at last it fell down and was broken. Our material churches and temples in this city have been burnt with fire; but the spiritual temple abides forever. Let death destroy the temple of the body; within a while it shall be raised to greater glory. As for the temple of the soul, it being immaterial, is not capable of corruption. When Xerxes destroyed all the Grecian temples, he caused the beautiful temple of Diana to be preserved. That soul which has the beauty of holiness shining in it shall be preserved to eternity. God will not demolish His own temple; Christ is the Foundation on which this temple is built, 1 Corinthians 3:9. His blood cements all the stones together, and as long as the foundation and cement hold, so long this temple shall last--and that is forever!

2. See the difference between the godly and the wicked. The heart of the godly is a temple; the heart of the wicked is a dunghill, "a cage of unclean birds," Revelation 18:2. His mind is the devil's mint; he is continually minting unchaste, impure thoughts; his heart is the anvil where he is daily hammering of sin. He is far from being a temple; he is a Sodom wherein are the heavings and boilings of lust. Proverbs 10:20, "The heart of the wicked is little worth." A sinner's heart is a common inn where all who will, may lodge; it is not a temple--but a pest house. He has the plague of the heart. But a godly man's heart is a sacred temple which God highly values, and which He has promised to dwell in and revive, Isaiah 57:15.

3. See wherein a great part of the nation's safety lays, namely, in having a store of these spiritual temples. In ancient times, temples were places of safety. When Adonijah was in fear of his life, he ran to the temple and caught hold on the horns of the altar. Believers are temples; they are the safeguard of a nation. It is the best policy of a magistrate to preserve these living temples. The presence of the godly privileges a land from many judgments which else would befall it. "Hasten!" said the angel to Lot, "Get to Zoar, for I can do nothing until you be come there!" Genesis 19:22. So long as this spiritual temple stood there, Sodom was a privileged place; but when Lot was gone--then came fire and brimstone!

It is a great mercy to London that, though many of the churches have been burned in the great fire--yet we still have so many spiritual temples standing, in which prayer is made night and day for this city. The saints are England's sanctuaries. God put His name in Solomon's temple--but He puts His Spirit in His living temples, 1 Corinthians 3:16. Were it not for a few believers, the Lord would soon break up house in England and let the fox and wild boar come to devour. David was the atlas who helped to bear up church and state. Psalm 75:3, "I bear up the pillars." Believers bear up the trembling pillars of a nation. No sooner were the Christians gotten out of Jerusalem and fled to Pella, than Jerusalem was destroyed. The safety and happiness of a kingdom is in being stored with living temples. The holy seed supports the state, Isaiah 6:13. The throne stands safest, when it joins to the temple.

4. If the saints are the temples of God--then how dangerous it is for any to abuse and injure them! Wicked men reproach the godly, calling them factious and seditious. And now they brand them with a new name "Puritans". But don't you know that the saints are the temples of God? How dare you thus throw dirt on God's temples!

Many seem to give great reverence to outward temples and churches--but they have no concern for spiritual temples. They consecrate dead temples--but persecute living temples! To injure the people of God--is to do violence to God Himself! The Lord will avenge those who have wronged His living temples.

Nero caused the Christians to be devoured by lions. Others, he dipped in tar and set on fire--to be torches. As a just recompense for his cruelty, the afterward cut his own throat. "You are just in sending this judgment, O Holy One, who is and who always was. For your holy people and your prophets have been killed, and their blood was poured out on the earth. So you have given their murderers blood to drink. It is their just reward." Revelation 16:5-6.

USE 2. Are God's people temples? It reproves such as are careful to beautify the outward temple of their bodies--but not the inward temple of their souls. Pambus wept when he saw a harlot attractively dressing herself with the comb and mirror. The Apostle exhorts us to adorn the inward man, Peter 3:4. Many clothe the body in gold apparel and deck it with pearls and diamonds--but have no regard to deck their souls with the jewels of grace! The soul is to be the place of Christ's residence, the holy of holies; but this temple is not cleansed by repentance, nor adorned with humility. Nay, how many stain their souls with pride and envy--so that they look rather like Satan's synagogue than God's temple!

USE 3. Let us examine whether we are the temples of God. How shall that be known? I answer, by being made like God. All God's temples are made in some measure like Him.

1. God is a spirit. Are we spiritual? How can he say that he is God's temple--who savors the earth? Is he a divine temple--who is made only of earth? He is rather a mud-hole than a temple!

2. God is pure. Purity is as essential to the Godhead, as light is of the essence of the sun. Have we holy and chaste affections? Is the love of sin purged out? Then we are temples because we resemble God. Alas, what shall we say to those who are immersed and steeped in wickedness? They swim in sin as the fish in the water! Do these look like temples of God? Are they like Him? It would be blasphemy to call them God's temples!

3. God is merciful. He does good to the unjust as well as the just--as the dew falls on the thistle as well as the rose. All God's temples are like Him; they are full of mercy and sympathy. They are still pitying and helping others like the good Samaritan, who poured in oil and wine into the man's wounds, Luke 10:34. What shall we say to those who have no mercy? Their affections are frozen; they cruelly oppress others. Is this to be like God, who is merciful? Shall we call these temples, or rather sepulchers, who swallow up others alive? James 2:13, "He shall have judgment without mercy, who showed no mercy." Well, by this we may evidence whether we are the temples of Jehovah. God makes all His temples like Him; therefore, they are said to be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4.

USE 4. EXHORTATION, and it has two branches:

1. You who are the temples of God, let me beseech you to take heed of defiling God's temple. 1 Corinthians 3:17, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

Do not defile God's temple by intermixing with the wicked. Bad company is defiling. 1 Corinthians 5:9, "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people." The wicked are good for nothing, but to defile God's temple. Their words are defiling, 1 Corinthians 15:33; their examples are defiling, Psalm 106:35. It was an abomination by the law to touch any dead things, Leviticus 22:4. He who touched them was unclean. What are saints, who are living temples, doing--touching the dead? 2 Corinthians 6:14, "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" We would be loathe to lie in an house haunted with spirits. Wicked men are haunted with devils, Ephesians 2:3, and shall we have any familiarity with the devil? If we cannot make others better--let not them make us worse.

Do not defile God's temple by immorality. This sin defiles both the outward temple--and the inner. It defiles the outward temple of the body and turns it into a brothel. Many desire to have their dead bodies embalmed--but their living bodies are adulterated. Again, immorality pollutes the inner temple of the soul; it turns its azure brightness into sable. The lustful person, Clemens Alexandrinus compares to a centaur which, according to the heathens, was half a man and half a beast. He is a man while reason guides, a beast while lust sways. The Scripture brings in the lustful man neighing as a horse, Jeremiah 5:8. Lust is like a feverish heat, very pernicious. It is better to deny lust--than feed it. Lust pleases the depraved senses; but, as sweet things breed bile, so all the sweet delights in sin will turn to bitter bile. Proverbs 7:23, "Until a dart strikes through his liver." Cupid's dart makes way for death's dart!

There are three Scriptures which should sound a retreat and call off people from their lustful pursuit. Proverbs 22:14, "The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is under the Lord's wrath will fall into it!" Ephesians 5:5, "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure person--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." 2 Peter 2:9-10, "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, especially those who follow the polluting desires of the flesh." I think such as are not atheists should have their joints loosed and their knees smite one against another when they read this handwriting of God. The fair fruit of beauty has poison in it. Adulterers swim into the Dead Sea at last. The harlots house "leads to death; it is the road to hell," Proverbs 2:18. Who would, for a drop of pleasure, drink a sea of wrath!

Do not defile the temple of God by error. Errors and heresies are as the leprosy which defiles the house, Leviticus 14:39. When I speak of errors, I mean "damnable heresies," 2 Peter 2:1. Such as strike at the core of true religion as:

- (1) Denying the God-head of Christ;
- (2) Denying the divinity of Scripture;
- (3) Denying original sin;
- (4) Denying actual sin in the regenerate;
- (5) Denying predestination;
- (6) Denying the call of God by the preaching of the Word;
- (7) Denying the soul's immortality.

These are doctrines of devils, I Timothy 4:1, which would root up all true religion. You who are the temples of God, take heed of defiling yourselves with these!

Among other soul-damning errors which defile God's temples, IDOLATRY is not the least. "Keep yourselves from idols!" 1 John 5:21. In the law, God laid claim to the fat of the sacrifice, Leviticus 3:3. Just so, all divine worship, which is the fat of the sacrifice, the Lord will have peculiarly reserved for Himself, whereas the idolater gives that to the idol which is due to God. Idolatry is spiritual adultery. Ezekiel 23:37, "With their idols have they committed adultery!" Idolatry opens the sluice to all God's judgments; therefore, the Jews used to say in all the punishments which befell them--there was an ounce of the golden calf in them.

Our nature is as prone to idolatry--as dry wood is to take fire. This plague is catching. The Jews "made cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. And they gave drink offerings to their other idol gods!" Jeremiah 7:18. Rather than not worship something, men will worship the devil! Leviticus 17:7, "They must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons that they have prostituted themselves with." In the Hebrew, it is "to the hairy ones," because the devils appeared to them in the form of satyrs or goats.

Let all God's people, as they prize their salvation, beware of idolatry! It is remarkable when the Apostle has said, "You are the temple of the living God," he adds presently, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" and verse 17, "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord."

And what is POPERY, but Romish idolatry? That God's living temples may not be defiled with idolatry of the church of Rome, I shall show some of the chief teachings in Popery, and anatomize that religion a little. And, when I am done, I think everyone should abhor that cheat of Rome, and say of the papists, as once Jacob did of Simeon and Levi, brethren in evil, Genesis 49:6, "May I never enter their council; may I never join their assembly!"

1. The first popish doctrine is that the pope is appointed by Christ to be the head of the church, and that he is the Vicar of Christ upon earth. This contradicts Scripture, which call Christ expressly the head of the Church, Colossians 2:19, Ephesians 5:23. For the pope to be head would be to make the church monstrous--to have two heads. I read of a beast rising up out of the sea, and the dragon gave him his power and his authority. Revelation 13:1. By the beast I understand Antichrist; and the dragon giving him power, that is, Satan giving power to the pope to exercise his papal greatness. If, then, the pope is the beast, he is very unfit to be the head of the church.

2. The second popish doctrine is the Mass, which is gross idolatry. Herein there are two errors:

The first error of the mass is transubstantiation. The papist's hold that the host or bread in the sacrament, after the words of consecration, is turned into the very body of Christ! This is against reason. A body, having its dimensions, cannot be in several places at once. If Christ's body is locally and physically in heaven, then it cannot be in the bread--but it is in heaven. Acts 3:21, "Whom the heavens must receive until the time of restitution of all things." That the bread is not turned into the body of Christ, I prove thus. If the bread is the very body of Christ--then all who eat the bread in the sacrament receive Christ; but that is not so, for the Apostle said of some, they did "eat and drink their own damnation," 1 Corinthians 11:27. The fathers were against this opinion of the corporal presence of Christ in the host. We eat Christ's body, said Cyprian, sacramentally by faith. "This is My body," that is, a sign and figure of my body, said Tertullian.

The second error of the mass is the papist's daily offer up Christ by way of sacrifice in the mass. This reflects dishonor upon Christ's priestly office--as if His sacrifice on the cross was imperfect. Hebrews 10:12, "This man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God;" verse 14, "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified." Behold the completeness of Christ's sacrifice. He has finished His work, and there remains nothing for us now, but to believe in Him.

3. The third popish error is that they hold the Scriptures are not for the common people. They lock them up in Latin--an unknown language. They make the Scripture a book sealed. Faith comes by knowledge--but they, as Christ said, "take away the key of knowledge," Luke 11:52. If the Bible is searched into by the common people, it is a crime and is brought into the inquisition. God would have the Law read before all

Israel in their hearing, Deuteronomy 31:11. Therefore, surely it was not to be in an unknown language. The prince of Rome does as the prince of the air--he blinds men's eyes--and then leads them to execution! 2 Corinthians 4:4.

4. The fourth error in the church of Rome is their doctrine of satisfaction for sin. They exalt human nature and make it copartner with Christ in Justification. They hold that we, in our own persons, satisfy God's justice by penance, fasting, and good deeds. So said the council of Trent and the Rhemists. But where does the Scripture mention any such thing? Our confession of sin is no satisfaction for sin. If a traitor confesses his guilt, his confession does not satisfy justice for his treason. Our contrition is not satisfaction for sin. If a man is sorry that he owes such a debt, this does not at all satisfy for the debt. God's justice receives no satisfaction, except through Christ. The publican "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!" Luke 18:13. Here was a confession, a sinner; and contrition, he smote upon his breast--but it was far from satisfaction for his sin; therefore, he cries out for mercy, "God be merciful to me."

5. A fifth soul-poisoning doctrine in popery is their distinction of mortal and venial sins. Mortal sins, they say, such as perjury, adultery, murder--cast us out of God's favor and deserve damnation. But venial sins are such as somewhat displease God--yet do not deserve death--but are of their own nature pardonable. For instance, lust, rash anger, vain thoughts are venial sins. But we affirm, according to Scripture, that there are no venial sins, none of which we can say they do not deserve damnation. Lust is a violation of God's law, therefore, not in its own nature venial. Matthew 5:28, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Christ makes an impure glance of the eye, to be adultery. The least tincture of sin exposes to God's curse, Galatians 3:10. It is true, the greatest sins, through Christ's blood, are pardonable--but none are pardonable in their own nature.

6. The sixth error in the Romish religion is the doctrine of free-will. Bellarmine holds that the will is piously inclined, and that a man has an innate power to do good. But Augustine denies this, and I think our own experience may confute it. It is a saying of Chrysostom, "As a ship, when the rudder is broken, is carried up and down in the sea wherever the tempest will, so man, having lost the rudder of free-will, is carried up and down to sin where the devil will." The papists affirm that a man has some seeds and relics of spiritual life, and has power to convert himself. But the Apostle tells us that we are, by nature, without spiritual strength, Romans 5:6. Sin has cut the lock of righteousness where our strength lay. A man cannot of himself know the things of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. He cannot think a good thought, 2 Corinthians 3:5. Nay, there is in the will of man not only impotency but obstinacy; our will is in rebellion against God! Acts 7:51. It is crooked, like a piece of iron that is bent awry. It is only the sweet efficacy of omnipotent grace, which can overcome us. We yield not to God by surrender, but storm. We do not lay down our weapons--but they are beaten out of our hands. Whenever God converts, He creates, which is a sufficient confutation of the proud doctrine of freewill. "Man," said Ambrose, "has free-will to sin--but none to conversion."

7. The seventh popish error is their indulgences. They affirm that the pope, as Peter's successor, has power to grant an indulgence to men, by virtue whereof they are set free in the sight of God from the guilt and punishment of sin. This brings grist to the pope's mill. To give a pardon or indulgence is a flower of the crown of heaven alone! Mark 7:2, "Who can forgive sin but God alone?" The indulgence which the pontiff of Rome grants, is a key that opens the door to all vice. For what do the papists care what sins they commit--when they have a license from the pope! Roger Holland, the martyr, who was at first a Catholic and later converted, made this confession before Bonner, "At first," said he, "I was of your popish religion

and I made no reckoning of any sin, trusting the priest's absolution; swearing and immorality were no sins with me, because I could have them absolved for money."

8. The eighth popish error is their doctrine of salvation by personal merit. They hold that their good works expiate sin and merit mercy. Bellarmine said that a man has right to heaven upon a double title: the one is Christ's merit, and the other his own merit. And he brings that Scripture, 2 Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the just judge shall give me, at that day." His argument is this: If God crowns our good works--then they have merit. I answer, this does not follow. A king may confer a large gratuity not because it is deserved--but because he has a mind to set forth his bounty. God crowns us not for our works sake--but for His name's sake, Ezekiel 20:9.

OBJECTION. But if God, in justice, bestows the crown--then do not our works merit?

ANSWER 1. God gives a reward as a just judge; not to the worthiness of our works, but to the worthiness of Christ.

ANSWER 2. God, in justice, gives a reward not because we have deserved it but because He has promised it. The truth is that God, in free grace, crowns those works in the court of mercy, which He condemns in the court of justice. That good works cannot merit appears thus:

1. That which merits at God's hands must be a gift, not a debt. If a debtor pays his creditor what he borrowed, he does not merit anything from the creditor. Whatever service we do for God is a due debt; nay, it is but part of the debt. How then can we merit?

2. He who will merit must give God that which is perfect. But our good works are but shining sins, they are showered with pride, tainted with hypocrisy, so that we are far from meriting. I conclude this from Bernard, "Good works are the way to the kingdom, not the cause of it."

9. The ninth popish error is their purgatory fire. There is, said Bellarmine, an infernal place in the earth called purgatory in which the souls which were not fully cleansed in this life, are purged there by fire, before they can be received into heaven. Purgatory fire the papists make satisfactory for sin; which much derogates from the virtue and benefit of Christ's sufferings, "who Himself has purged our sins," Hebrews 1:3.

The Scripture nowhere asserts this doctrine of purgatory. It mentions no middle place. The wicked, at death, go immediately to hell. Luke 16:23, "The rich man was buried--and in hell he lift up his eyes in torment." Believers, at death, go immediately to heaven. Luke 23:43, "This day you shall be with Me in paradise." Christ was to be instantly in heaven, and the penitent thief was to be with Christ that very day. So that he was in no such place as purgatory--but went immediately from the cross to paradise. Christ's blood is purgatory in this life, 1 John 1:7. If men are not purged by Christ's blood, there is no purging by fire. Not only the Scripture but the Fathers were against purgatory. We do not read of two fires, said Augustine, only of hell-fire, not purgatory-fire. But this imaginary fire of purgatory, makes for something to sell in the pope's kitchen. For when men are about to make their will, if they leave good sums of money to the pope and his priests--they tell them that they will pray for them that they may be speedily released out of the pains of purgatory!

10. The next popish error is their praying to saints and angels.

Their praying to saints: The papists pray to several saints for the removal of temporal evils. They pray to St. Apolline to ease their toothache, to St. Petronelle to cure their fevers. They pray to other saints for the removal of spiritual evils. One said, if we pray to the departed saints, they, being stricken with compassion, pray to God for us. But how absurd is this! The saints in heaven do not know our grievances. "Abraham is ignorant of us," Isaiah 63:16. When Elijah was to be taken up to heaven, he said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you," 2 Kings 2:9, clearly implying that there was no place to ask him, after he was gone.

Their praying to angels: They bring that Scripture, Revelation 8:3, "Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and stood at the altar. And a great quantity of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people, to be offered on the gold altar before the throne." They say, that if the angels pray for us--may we pray to them. I answer, the angel there is to be understood of Christ, the Angel of the covenant, who offers up our prayers and puts His incense on them to perfume them. Just so, Augustine expounds it. Angel worship is prohibited, Colossians 2:9, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in worshiping of angels." And what is praying to them but a part of divine worship?

They distinguish between mediators of redemption, and intercession. They say they pray to Christ only as a mediator of redemption--but to angels as mediators of intercession. To this I answer, Christ is not only a Redeemer but an Advocate 1 John 2:1. He pleads our cause like the advocate for the client. Now, as it is a sin to make any our redeemer, but Christ--so it is a sin to make any our advocate but Christ. Those who pray to angels make them their advocates. That we may not pray to angels, I prove by two Scriptures. The first is Romans 10:14, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" We may not pray to any but whom we believe in. But we may not believe in an angel; therefore, we may not pray to him. The second Scripture is Hebrews 10:19, "Having boldness therefore to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The argument is this: he only is to be prayed to, by whom we have admission into heaven. By the blood of Jesus alone, we have admission into heaven; therefore, He alone is to be prayed to. When the angels can purchase for me an entrance into glory--then I will pray to them--and not before!

11. The next popish error is their image-worship. Pope Stephen the Third, maintaining images in temples, proclaimed their veneration, and caused the people to burn incense to them. This is contrary to the letter of the commandment, "Do not make idols of any kind. You must never worship or bow down to them." Images are teachers of lies; they represent God in a bodily shape. God said, "Let us make man in Our image," Genesis 1:16. But the papists say, "Let us make God in our image!" When the Lord delivered the Law, the people "heard His words but didn't see His form; there was only a voice," Deuteronomy 4:12. God cannot be pictured by any image. You cannot picture the soul--much less God, Isaiah 40:18, "To whom then will you liken God?" The papists tell us they worship God by the image. I answer, if it is absurd to bow down to the picture of a king--when the king himself is present--then much more to bow down to the image when God Himself is present! Jeremiah 23:24, "Do not I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord?"

12. The next popish error is that they deny that Christ endured the pains of hell in His soul. They are very rhetorical in setting forth the torments of His body--but they deny the sufferings of His soul. This opinion much derogates from Christ's sufferings, Isaiah 53:10, "You shall make His soul an offering for sin." Whatever would lessen Christ's sufferings, would lessen Christ's love to us. Jesus Christ underwent those pains which were equivalent to the pains of hell. He felt the displeasure of the Almighty; He was in a soul-agony when He was deserted. All which aggravates Christ's passion all the more--and declares His compassion to us.

13. The next popish error is their assuming power to themselves to absolve men of their oaths. Ecclesiastes 5:4, "When you make a vow to God, don't delay fulfilling it, because He does not delight in fools. Fulfill what you vow." But the papists make nothing of absolving and freeing men from their oaths. They hold that the pope has power to dispense with all vows made to God, and oaths of fidelity to princes. The pope, having Peter's key in his hand, undertakes to unlock men's consciences and loose them from all their obligations. How can that be good doctrine, which teaches men how they may be perjured, yet innocent? You who are the temples of the living God, take heed of defiling yourselves with these popish doctrines. Do not pollute and adulterate your souls by joining the temple of God to the house of demons. 2 Kings 5:18.

Besides, these soul-poisoning doctrines in popery, I shall show what a detestable religion it is--where you may see the wrinkled face of the whore of Rome!

1. The Romish religion is an UNSCRIPTURAL religion. The papists cannot say as much, as once the devil said, "It is written." They have not God's Word to show, for what they do. What Scripture have they to show, for their seven sacraments? What Scripture have they to show, for keeping the cup from the people? What Scripture have they to show, for their dirges and pilgrimages, going many miles to visit the shrines of saints? The Lord will say to them at last, "Who has required these things at your hand!"

2. The Romish religion is a CARNAL religion. It consists only of worshippings, cringings, and penance. 1 Corinthians 3:3, "Are you not carnal?" Whereas God will be worshiped in spirit, John 4:24. Living by faith, examining the heart, mortifying sin--these things Catholics are wholly strangers to. Popery is a mere external shell. It is a carcass, which has no soul in it.

3. The Romish religion is an UNEDIFYING religion. 1 Corinthians 14:12, "Let all things be done to edifying." But what edifying is done in their ceremonies? Their candles, flowers; their 'Hail Marys'; their incense, their beads, rings, medals, altar-clothes--what intrinsic goodness can there be in these? They draw the heart from the serious worship of God, causing it to mind superstitious vanities! What are the baptizing of bells, adoring of crucifixes, and sprinkling with ashes--but the deliriums of sick brains? Can these things purify the conscience? What is there in holy water to wash a defiled soul? Will the papist's balm and incense make them a sweet odor to God? Will their lighted candles show them the way to heaven?

4. The Romish religion is a PROUD religion. The pope calls himself Peter's successor--but he more truly exceeds him in pomp--than succeeds him in humility. The pope of Rome sets his mitre above all temporal crowns. He calls himself "servant of the servants of God," but he insults princes. He makes them stand barefoot at his holiness' gate and hold his stirrup. Pope Alexander the Third trod upon the neck of Frederick the Emperor. The pope causes the monarchs of the earth to become his tributaries.

5. The Romish religion is an IMMORAL religion. The papists are not the holy catholic church. At Rome, fornication keeps open shop and is, in some cases, preferred before honorable matrimony. The pope is called his holiness--but his chair is fouled. Pope Plus the Second and Julius the Third were stained with vice. Some of their popes have been guilty of sodomy, as Dr. Rivet relates out of their own writers. Pope John was guilty of selling sacred things and murder.

6. The Romish religion is a TOOTHLESS religion. It never hurts Satan. Popery is like a sword with a fine hilt--but has no edge; or like weak medicine which will not work. Some of the popish writers say that the cross is a holy charm or spell against the devil. But I think that it rather invites the devil--than frightens him!

Their singing, and their prayers in Latin, is the devil's music. Their whipping themselves, will not let out the blood of one sin. There lent-fasts will no more starve the devil, than it does their fat monks.

7. The Romish religion is a BLOODY religion. The pope does not content himself to have Peter's key in his hand, the power of excommunication--but he gets the civil sword too. That what he cannot defend by strength of argument, he may maintain by force of violence. Popery is propagated by violence. Witness the persecution under Pope Pius the Fourth, where multitudes of Christians were put to death. Witness the many thousands of the Albigenses and Waldenses who were cruelly murdered. Witness the Spanish inquisition, the massacre at Paris. Our own nation has felt the weight of antichrist; they who would not drink in the golden cup of Rome's fornication were forced to drink in the bloody cup of martyrdom! We know the papists are good at fireworks. It is an observation of a learned man that the persecutions under the bishop of Rome have been far greater then those under the emperors of Rome. God forbid we should ever nourish that Italian wolf which has sucked so much blood!

8. The Romish religion is a BLASPHEMOUS religion. The papists hold:

- That the pope is above Scripture; that he may dispense with it, and that his canons bind more than the Word of God.

- That infallibility is a jewel of his mitre; in his pontifical chair he cannot error.

- They hold that the virgin Mary is to be worshiped; they give her veneration. They call her "the queen of the world", "the ladder of heaven", "the gate of paradise". They say we may appeal from God's court--to the Virgin Mary's court. They affirm that she is at the golden altar in heaven--not only requesting mercy but commanding it. "God has decreed to give nothing without her," said Ozorius the Jesuit. The papists honor the Virgin Mary above Christ, ascribing more to her milk--than His blood! In their doxologies they say, "Praise be to God and the Virgin Mary, and also to Jesus Christ." What Christian ear can endure to hear these blasphemies!

9. The Romish religion is a RIDICULOUS religion, more fit to move to laughter, than devotion. What are their adoring of relics--but a Romish toy! The papists pretend to show Paul's chain with which he was bound, and the tail of the donkey which Christ rode on. They show John the Baptist's ear for a relic in Floride, his forehead in Spain--yet his whole head they affirm is to be seen in Rome! Thus the Roman faith is turned into a fable.

10. The Romish religion is a GOD-PROVOKING religion. As if the Lord were not wise enough to appoint the manner of His own worship--they will prescribe rules to Him. This sin has made God divorce a people. Hosea 2:2, "She is no longer My wife, and I am no longer her husband." It has made the fury to come up into His face. Ezekiel 6:4, "I will cast down your slain men before your idols." Seeing you will be kneeling to your idols--I will lay your dead men at the feet of your altars!

11. The Romish religion is a SOUL-DESTROYING religion. Worshiping the beast, and drinking the cup of God's wrath are put together in Revelation 14:9. It is not clear to me how men dying in the Roman religion, can be saved. For besides all that has been said, the papists bring themselves directly under that curse, Revelation 22:18, "I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the prophetic words of this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone removes any of the words of this prophetic book, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book." The papists are guilty of this: they take away

from Scripture for they blot out the second commandment; and they add to Scripture. They say that Scripture is not perfect; therefore replace it with their traditions, which they hold to be not only equal with Scripture, but superior to it.

Oh, then, if we are the temples of God, let us not defile ourselves with popery! Let us not receive the mark of the beast--either in our right hand or forehead. For what agreement has the temple of God with idols! It would be worse for us to embrace popery, than for our forefathers. They lived in times of darkness and knew no better; but we, like Jonathan, have tasted the honey of the Gospel and our eyes have been enlightened. Therefore, if we should pollute ourselves with idols, what judgment and fiery indignation might we expect! So much for the first branch of exhortation.

2. The second branch of the exhortation is, you who are the temples of God--show it forth. Live as temples. Do temple work and study temple purity.

Do temple WORK. Offer up spiritual sacrifices. In the temple, sacrifices were offered up. You are both temple and priests, 1 Peter 2:5. Offer up a threefold sacrifice to God in the temple of your souls.

First, the sacrifice of prayer. The temple was a place of prayer, 1 Kings 8:30. Prayer is the pouring out of the soul--and God is delighted with this sacrifice! Proverbs 8:15, "The prayer of the upright is His delight." Prayer is the breathing of God's Spirit within us, Romans 8:26, and is not He delighted with the voice of His own Spirit? Offer up this sacrifice daily!

Second, as spiritual temples, offer up the sacrifice of a broken heart, Psalm 51:17. This is better than all burnt-offerings. Sighs and groans coming from a heart broken for sin, are like the breaking of the alabaster box of very precious perfume, or like the incense which perfumed the temple.

Third, as spiritual temples, offer up the sacrifice of praise. Psalm 50:23, "Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me." There was singing and praising God in the temple. The heart must be the altar of praise--and the tongue the organ. Where should God's high praises be resounded, but in His temples? Does the sun and stars praise God, and shall not the temple much more? God has but little praise in the world; sinners dishonor and blaspheme Him. Oh, you who are the living temples of God--show forth His praise! Read over your receipts of mercy--and be thankful. When mercies descend from God's throne--praises must ascend from His temple! Has not God given you Christ? Has not He enriched and bespangled you with grace? And does not all this call for gratitude? Oh, sound forth the honor of God's name! Be joyful in Him and triumph in His praise. Join with the angels and arch-angels in blessing God. Christians must not be graves to bury God's mercies in--but temples to sound forth His praise.

Study temple purity. The temple was very holy. So, Christians, your hearts must be refined and consecrated. "The temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." Then we look like God's temples when this inscription is written upon us: "holiness to the Lord." The temple was overlaid with gold within and without, which was a type of the spiritual temple; both heart and life must be overlaid with this pure gold of holiness. All the three persons in the Trinity come into the temple of the heart. God the Father is said to dwell in the heart, Isaiah 57:15, and God the Son, Ephesians 3:17, and God the Holy Spirit, 2 Timothy 1:14. Shall not that place be kept pure, which is the temple and presence-chamber of the blessed Trinity! Consider:

Holiness beautifies God's temples. We read that the temple was decked with beautiful stonework, Luke 21:5. Holiness is the adorning of God's spiritual temples with beautiful stonework. Aaron had garments for

glory and beauty, Exodus 28. When God's temples are hung with the tapestry of holiness, it is for glory and beauty. What is the glory of God Himself, but holiness? Exodus 15:11, "Glorious in holiness." That which makes the Godhead glorious, must make the temples of God glorious.

Holiness is the nourisher of a Christian's peace. The holy oil of grace, keeps the lamp of peace burning. Acts 9:31, "The believers were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Sin bores an hole in the vessel, to let all our joy and peace run out.

Holiness is that which Satan raises his chief batteries against. He does not envy you of your estate, be as rich as you will. But his spite is at your piety. He would blast the flower of your grace and turn God's temple into a den of thieves! Oh, look to your holiness! Fortify that place most--where the devil labors to break in!

USE 5. The fifth and last use is for comfort to such as are God's spiritual temples. They shall have much of God's company. 2 Corinthians 6:16, "You are the temple of God, as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." It is no small privilege to have God inhabit His temples. We who at first had Satan to dwell in us, Ephesians 2:2, being made temples of grace--now have God to dwell in us.

QUESTION. How does God dwell in us?

ANSWER. By His Spirit, 2 Timothy 2:14, "The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us." The Spirit of God dwells in us by His wonderful presence and influence. The indwelling of the Spirit carries in it these three privileges:

1. The Spirit of God, being in us, infuses sanctity. Let us be ever so vigilant, corruption will gather in the heart. Now the Spirit, dwelling there, takes part with grace against sin. He enables us to check corruption, and cast filth out of the temple. The Spirit, being in us, makes our heart as a garden for delight; and as a temple for purity. Bernard relates there was a fountain of oil which ran into the temple of Rome. By virtue of the Spirit's indwelling, a fountain of holy oil issues forth and runs in the temple of our hearts. 1 John 2:27, "You have received an anointing from the Holy One."

2. The Spirit of God, dwelling in us as His temples, sweetly communicates Himself to us. To dwell with one is an act of communion. God's Spirit dwelling in us, is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation opening the deep mysteries of Christ to us, 1 Corinthians 2:12. He is a spirit of activity, exciting and animating our grace, John 6:63. He is a spirit of magnanimity, firing us with zeal and courage, Acts 4:8. He is a spirit of joy, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, Romans 8:16. Such as are not God's temples, have none of the impressions and holy ardors of the Spirit in them; they know not, what communion with God means.

3. The Spirit of God dwelling in us will never wholly leave us. Where one dwells, he is constant. God's Spirit will not totally leave His temple. God's Spirit may withdraw from the soul in respect of His comfortable presence--but not in respect of His gracious presence. He is not only a lodger in His temple--but an indweller. He does not only operate, but command. He may work in a reprobate--but He dwells in a believer. Oh, Christian, this is your comfort--if ever the Spirit of God has come savingly into your soul and taken possession of you--He will never leave you altogether! He will ripen grace into perfection. Fear not, of final perishing. That temple can never be demolished by Satan, which has Christ the Cornerstone supporting it--and the blessed Spirit inhabiting it!

Such as are gracious temples--shall one day be glorious temples! Those who are temples of virtue, shall be temples of eternal honor. As God filled the temple with His glory, 1 Kings 8:11, so He will, in heaven,

manifest His glory in His living temples, in a more precious and illustrious manner.

If the saints shall be glorious temples--then surely there will be joy in these temples. What a climax of joy will it be, when the everlasting doors of our souls shall be set open, that the King of glory may enter in! Praises to the most High God, shall be eternally sung in the temples of our hearts. It will be the work of heaven--to love God and admire free grace, who has made us temples so richly wrought and embellished with glory, where God Himself will reside forever and display the infinite brightness of His face!

Oh, you saints, lay aside all your despondencies and discontents, and comfort yourselves with the hopes of future eternal happiness! Shall the outward temple of our body be so splendid and magnificent, like Christ's glorious body, Philippians 3:21? Oh, then, how transcendently shining and beautiful shall the inward temple of our soul be! What angel can express this! But here I must draw a veil. We shall never fully understand heaven--until we come to heaven!

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