

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 9

by William Gurnall

The Christian's breastplate is the righteousness of the evangelical righteousness, which is a supernatural principle of new life that preserves the principal part of a Christian's soul and conscience.

Scripture: Proverbs 12:26, Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 6:14, Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 1:6

Topics: "Christian Holiness", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

William Gurnall preaches about the importance of maintaining the power of holiness and righteousness in the lives of Christians. He emphasizes that true holiness is essential for communion with God, peace of soul, influence on others, and as evidence for heaven. Gurnall highlights the devil's opposition to holiness, the need to align with God's design for holiness, and the impact of holiness on one's own life and the lives of others.

Transcript

DIRECTION SIXTH.

The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Second Piece--The Christian's Breastplate.

'And having on the breastplate of righteousness' (Eph. 6:14).

These words present us with a second piece of armour, commended to, and charged upon, all Christ's soldiers--a breastplate, and the metal it is to be made of, righteousness--'and having on the breastplate of righteousness.' Concerning this, there requires that a double inquiry would be made. First. What is the righteousness here meant? Second. Why is it compared to this piece of the soldier's armour, the breastplate.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE WORDS.

FIRST INQUIRY.

[The righteousness meant.]

What is the righteousness here meant? The Scripture speaks of a twofold righteousness; the one legal, the other evangelical.

First. A legal righteousness--that which God required of man in the covenant of works: 'Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them,' Rom. 10:5. Three things concur to make up this law righteousness.

First. An obedience absolutely perfect to the law of God, that is, perfect extensively, in regard of the object; intensively, in regard of the subject. The whole law, in short, must be kept with the whole heart; the least defect either of part or degree in the obedience spoils all.

Second. This perfect obedience to the law of God must be personally performed by him that is thus righteous. 'The man that doeth these things shall live.' In that covenant, God had but man's single bond for performance--no surety engaged with him--so that God having none else to come upon for the default, it was necessary, except God will lose his debt, to exact it personally on every man.

Third. This perfect personal obedience must be perpetual. This law allows no after-gain. If the law be once broken, though but in one very thought, there is no place for repentance in that covenant, though it were attended with a life afterward never so exact and spotless. After-obedience being but due, cannot make amends for former disobedience. He doth not satisfy the law for killing a man once, that doeth so no more. How desperate were our condition, if we could not be listed in Christ's muster-roll, till we were provided with such a breastplate as this is? Adam indeed had such a righteousness made to his hand. His heart and the law were in unison; it answered it, as face answers face in a glass. It was as natural to him to be righteous, as now it is to his posterity to be unrighteous. God was the engraver of his own image upon man, which consisted in righteousness and holiness. And he who made all so perfect, that upon a review of the whole creation, he neither added nor altered anything, but saw 'all very good,' was not less curious in the master-piece of all his work, he 'made man perfect.' But Adam sinned, and defiled our nature, and now our nature defiles us; so that, never since could Adam's plate--righteousness, I mean--fit the breast of any mere man. If God would save all the world for one such righteous man--as once he offered to do Sodom for ten--that one could not be found. The apostle divides all the world into 'Jew and Gentile,' Rom. 3:9. He is not afraid to lay them all in the dirt; --we have before proved that they are 'all under sin. As it is written, There is none, no, not one.' Not the most boastful philosopher among the Gentiles, nor the precisest Pharisee among the Jews--we may go yet further--not the holiest saint that ever lived, can stand righteous before that bar. 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant,' saith David, 'for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,' Ps. 143:2. God hath nailed that door up, that none can for ever enter by a law-righteousness into life and happiness. This way to heaven is like the northern passage to the Indies --whoever attempts it, is sure to be frozen up before he gets halfway thither.

Second. The second righteousness, which the Scripture speaks of, is an evangelical righteousness. Now this also is twofold--a righteousness imputed or imparted. The imputed righteousness, is that which is wrought by Christ for the believer; the imparted, that which is wrought by Christ in the believer. The first of these, the imputed righteousness, is the righteousness of our justification, that by which the believer stands just and righteous before God, and is called, by way of distinction from the latter, 'the righteousness of God,' Rom. 3:21; 10:3. Not, as if the other righteousness were not of God also, but,

First. Because this is not only wrought by Christ, but also performed in Christ--who is God --and is not inherent in us, so that the benefit of it redounds by faith to us, as if we had wrought it. Hence Christ is called 'the Lord our righteousness.'

Second. Because this is the righteousness, and not the other, which God hath ordained to be the meritorious cause of the justification of our persons, and also of the acceptation of our inherent righteousness imparted by him to us. Now, this righteousness belongs to 'the fourth piece of armour'--the 'shield of faith'--indeed we find it bearing its name from that grace, Rom. 4:11, where it is called 'the righteousness of faith,' because apprehended and applied by faith unto the soul. The 'righteousness' therefore which is here compared to 'the breastplate,' is the latter of the two, and that is, the righteousness of our sanctification, which I called a righteousness imparted, or a righteousness wrought by Christ in the believer. Now, this take, thus described. It is a supernatural principle of a new life planted in the heart of every child of God by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby they endeavour to approve themselves to God and man, in performing what the word of God requires to be performed to both. Briefly let us unfold what is rolled up in this description.

1. Here is the efficient, or workman--the Holy Spirit. Hence it is that the several parts of holiness are called 'fruits of the Spirit,' Gal. 5:22. If the Spirit be not at the root, no such fruit can be seen on the branches as holiness. 'Sensual,' and 'having not the Spirit,' are inseparably coupled, Jude 19. Man, by his fall, hath a double loss; God's love to him and his likeness to God. Christ restores both to his children --the first, by his righteousness imputed to them; the second, by his Spirit re-imparting the lost image of God to them, which consists 'in righteousness and true holiness.' Who, but a man, can impart his own nature, and beget a child like himself? and who, but the Spirit of God, can make a creature like God, by making him partaker of the divine nature?

2. Here is the work produced--a supernatural principle of a new life. (1.) By a principle of life, I mean, an inward disposition and quality, sweetly, powerfully, and constantly inclining it to that which is holy; so that the Christian, though passive in the production, is afterward active, and co-working with the Spirit in all actions of holiness; not as a lifeless instrument is in the hand of a musician, but as a living child in the hand of a father. Therefore they are said to be 'led by the Holy Spirit,' Rom. 8:14. (2.) It is a principle of new life; the Spirit's work was not chafe and recover what was swooning, but to work a life de novo--anew, in a soul quite dead: 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses,' Eph. 2:1. The devil comes as orator, to persuade by argument, when he tempts; the Spirit as a creator, when he converts. The devil draws forth and enkindles what he finds raked up in the heart before; but the Holy Spirit puts into the soul what he finds not there--called in Scripture the 'seed' of God, I John 3:9. 'Christ formed in you,' Gal. 4:19, the 'new creature,' Gal. 6:15, the 'law' put by God into the inner man, Jer. 31:33, which Paul calls 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' Rom. 8:2. (3.) It is a supernatural principle. By this we distinguish it from Adam's righteousness and holiness, which was co-natural to him, as now sin is to us; and, had he stood, would have been propagated to us as naturally as now his sin is. Holiness was as natural to Adam's soul as health was to his body, they both resulting ex principiis recte constitutis--from principles pure and rightly disposed.

3. Here is the soil or subject in which the Spirit plants this principle of holiness--the child of God. 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,' Gal. 4:6. Not a child in all his family that is unlike his Father--'as is the heavenly, so are they that are heavenly'--and none but children have this stamp of true holiness on them. As the apostle, Rom. 8:9, concludes, we 'have not his Spirit' if we be 'in the flesh'--that is in an unholy sinful state--so he concludes, we are 'not his' children if we 'have not his Spirit,' thus transforming and sanctifying us. There is indeed a holiness and sanctification, taken in a large sense, which may be found in such as are not children. So all the children of believers are 'holy,' I Cor. 7; who are not all children of God. Yea false professors also gain the name of being sanctified, Heb. 10:29,

because they pretend to be so. But that which the Scripture calls righteousness and true holiness, is a sculpture the Spirit engraves on none but the children of God. The Spirit sanctifies none but whom Christ prays his Father to 'sanctify,' and they are his peculiar number given to God of him, John 17:17.

4. Here is the efficacy of this principle, planted by the Spirit in the heart of a child of God, whereby he endeavours. As the heart--which is the principle of the natural life in the body--from the infusion of natural life, is ever beating and working, so the principle of new life in the soul is ever endeavouring. The 'new creature' is not still-born; true holiness is not a dull habit, that sleeps away the time with doing nothing. The woman cured by Christ 'arose' up presently 'and ministered unto them,' Matt. 8:15. No sooner is this principle planted in the heart, but the man riseth up to wait on God, and act for God with all his might and main. The seed which the sanctifying Spirit cast into the soul, is not lost in the soil, but quickly shows it is alive by the fruit it bears.

5. Here is the imperfect nature of this principle --as it shows its reality by endeavouring, so its imperfection, that it enables but to an endeavour, not to a full performance. Evangelical holiness makes the creature rather willing than able to give full obedience. The saint's heart leaps when his legs do but creep in the way of God's commandments. Mary asked 'where they had laid Christ?' meaning, it seems, to carry him away on her shoulders; which she was not able for to do. Her affections were stronger than her back. That principle of holiness which is in the saint, makes him lift at that duty which he can little more than stir. Paul, a saint of the first magnitude, he gives us his own character, with other eminent servants of Christ, rather from the sincerity of their will and endeavour, than perfection of their work. 'Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly,' Heb. 13:18. He doth not say 'In all things we do live honestly,' as if no step were taken away by them; no, he durst not say so for a world. But thus much he dares assert for himself and brethren, 'that they are willing in all things to do what was holy and righteous.' Where 'willing' is not a weak listless velleity,[1] but a will exerted in a vigorous endeavour, it weighs as much in an impartial ear, as that of the same Paul, Acts 24:16, 'herein do I exercise myself.' He was so willing, as to use his best care and labour in the ways of holiness, and having this testimony in his own breast, he is not afraid to lay claim to 'a good conscience,' though he doth not fully attain to that he desires: 'We trust we have a good conscience, willing,' &c.--he means in the favourable interpretation of the gospel, for the law allows no such good conscience.

6. Here is the uniformity of this principle in its actings--'to God and man.' True holiness doth not divide what God joins together: 'God spake all these words,' Ex. 20:1, first table and second also. Now a truly sanctified heart does not skip or blot one word God hath written, but desires to be a faithful executor to perform the whole will of God.

7. Here is the order of its actings--as 'to God and man;' so, first to God, and then to man; yea, to God, in his righteousness and charity to man. Paul saith of the Macedonians that they first gave 'their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God,' II Cor. 8:5. God is first served, and man, in obedience to the will of God.

8. Here is the rule it goes by--'what the word of God requires.' Apocryphal holiness is no true holiness. We cannot write in religion a right line without a rule, or by a false one. And all are false rules besides the word--'to the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. 8:20.

SECOND INQUIRY.

[Why righteousness is compared to a breastplate.]

The second thing to be inquired, is, why righteousness and holiness are compared to the breastplate? And that is because of a twofold use that the soldier makes of this piece of armour, and of a twofold benefit he receives from it.

First. The breastplate preserves the principal part of the body, and that is the breast, where the very vitals of man are closely couched together, and where a shot or stab is more deadly than in other parts that are remote from the fountain of life. A man may outlive many wounds received in the arms or legs, but a stab in the heart or other vital parts is the certain messenger of death approaching. Thus righteousness and holiness preserve the principal part of a Christian --his soul and conscience. We live or die spiritually, yea eternally, as we look to our souls and consciences. It is not a wound in estate, credit, or any other worldly enjoyment, that kills us in this sense. These touch not, hazard not, the Christian's life, any more than the shaving of the beard, or the paring of the nails, do the man's. Spiritual vitals are seated in the soul and conscience. It must be a spiritual dagger that stabs these, and that only is sin which is said to 'hunt for the precious life,' Prov. 6:26. This is the 'dart' that strikes the young man 'through the liver,' who hasteth to his lust, 'as the bird to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life,' Prov. 7:23. Now righteousness and holiness defend the conscience from all wounds and harms from sin, which is the weapon Satan useth to give the conscience its deadly stab with.

Second. The breastplate, by defending this principal part, emboldens the soldier, and makes him fearless of danger; and that is as necessary in fight as the other. It is almost all one for an army to be killed or cowed. A dead soldier slain upon the place, will do, in a manner, as much good, as a dead-hearted soldier that is dismayed with fear--his heart is killed while he is alive--and a naked breast exposeth the unarmed soldier to a trembling heart; whereas one otherwise cowardly, having his breast well defended with a plate of proof, will the more boldly venture upon the pikes. Thus, righteousness, by defending the conscience, fills the creature with courage in the face of death and danger; whereas guilt--which is the nakedness of the soul--puts the stoutest sinner into a shaking fit of fear. 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion,' Prov. 28:1. They say sheep are scared by the clatter of their own feet as they run. So is the sinner with the din of his guilt. No sooner did Adam see his plate off, and himself to be naked, but he is afraid at God's voice, as if he had never been acquainted with him. Never can we truly recover our courage, till we recover our holiness--'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God,' I John 3:21.

Connection of the Breastplate and Girdle.

The words being thus opened, the observations are easily drawn from them. But the copulative 'and,' with which this piece of armour is so closely buckled to the former, bids us make a little stand, to take notice how lovingly truth and holiness are here conjoined, like the sister-curtains of the tabernacle, Ex. 26:13, so called in the Hebrew; and it is a pity any should unclasp them which God hath so fitted to each other. Let this then be the note from hence: Note. That truth and holiness must go together.

First. Take truth, for truth of doctrine. An orthodox judgment, with an unholy heart and an ungodly life, is as uncomely as a man's head would be on a beast's shoulders. That man hath little cause to brag that what he holds is truth, if he doth be wicked. Poor wretch, if thou beest a slave to the devil, it matters not to what part thy chain be fastened, whether to the head or foot. He holds thee as sure to him by thy foot in thy practice as he would by thy head, if heretical and blasphemous; yea, thou art worse on it in some respects

than they who are like themselves all over. Thy wickedness is greater, because committed in the face of truth. Many--the mistakes of their erroneous judgments, betray them unto the unholiness of their practice. Their wicked lives are the conclusion which follows necessarily upon the premises of their errors. But thy judgment lights thee another way, except thou meanest further to accumulate thy sin by fathering thy unholiness on truth itself. They only miss their way to heaven in the dark, or are misled by a false light of erroneous judgment, which possibly, rectified, would bring them back into the path of holiness; but thou sinnest by the broad light of truth, and goest on boldly to hell at noon-day; like the devil himself, who knows truth from error well enough but hates to be ruled by it. Should a minstrel sing to a sweet tune with her voice and play to another with her hand that is harsh and displeasing, such music would more grate the judicious ear than if she had sung to what she had played. Thus, to sing to truth with our judgment, and play wickedness with our heart and hand in our life, is more abhorring to God and all good men, than where the judgment is erroneous as well as the life ungodly. Nahash had not enraged David so much, if he had come with an army of twenty thousand men into the field against him, as he did by abusing his ambassadors so basely. The open hostility which many express by their ungodly lives, does not so much provoke God as the base usage they give to his truth, which he sends to treat with them, yea, in them. This kindles the fire of his wrath into a flame of purpose, when he sees men put scorn upon his truth, by walking contrary to the light of it, and imprisoning it from having any command over them in their lives, and yet own it to be the truth of God.

Second. Take it for truth of heart; and so truth and holiness must go together. In vain do men pretend to sincerity, if they be unholy in their lives. God owns no unholy sincerity. The terms do clash one with another. Sincerity teacheth the soul to point at the right end of all its actions--the glory of God. Now it is not enough to set the right end before us, but to walk in the right way to it. We shall never come at God's glory out of God's way. Holiness and righteousness is the sincere man's path, set by God as a causeway on which he is to walk, both to the glorifying of God and to being glorified by God. Now he that thinks to find a shorter cut and a nearer way than this, to obtain this end, he takes but pains to undo himself. As he finds a new way of glorifying God, which God hath not chalked, so he must find a new heaven which God hath not prepared, or else he must go without one to reward him for his pains. O friends! look to find this stamp of righteousness and holiness on your sincerity. The proverb saith, 'Hell is full of good wishes,'--of such, who now, when it is too late, wish they had acted their part otherwise when on earth than they did. And do you not think there are there more than a good store of good meanings also? such who pretended, when on earth, they meant well, and their hearts were honest; however, it happened that their lives were otherwise. What a strange delusion is this? If one should say, 'Though all the water the bucket brings up be naught and stinking, yet that which is in the well is all sweet,' who would believe him? Thy heart upright, and thy meanings good, when all that proceeds from thy heart in thy life is wicked! How can it be? Who will believe thee? surely thou dost not thyself.

The Christian's especial care--to keep on his Breastplate.

It is now time, having measured the ground, to lay the bottom stone on which the structure from these words is to be reared. I thought to have drawn out several points as distinct foundations, to build our discourse upon, but shall now choose to unite all in a single point--as one main building--though I make a few more rooms therein to entertain what else should have been handled severally. The point is this--

Doctrine. That he who means to be a Christian indeed, must endeavour to maintain the power of holiness and righteousness in his life and conversation. This is to have 'the breastplate of righteousness' and to have it on also. He is a holy righteous man that hath a work of grace and holiness in his heart, as he is a

living man that hath a principle of life in him. But he maintains the power of holiness that exerts this vigorously in his daily walking; as he the power of natural life, in whom the principle of life seated in the heart empowers every member to do its particular office in the body strenuously. Thus walked the primitive Christians, 'in whose veins,' saith Jerome, 'the blood of Christ was yet warm.' Their great care was to keep on this breastplate of righteousness close and entire, that it neither might loosen by negligence nor be broken by presumptuous sinning. The character then that a saint was known by from other men, was his holy walking, Luke 1:6. There it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, 'They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' This was also holy Paul's everyday exercise, 'to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men,' Acts 24:16. Never did any more curiously watch the health of their body, than he attended to the health of his soul, that no unholiness or unrighteousness--which is the only bane of it--might distemper and defile it. And truly we, who come after such holy ones in the same profession, do bind ourselves to our good behaviour, that we will walk holily and righteously as they did. The point carries its evidence on its forehead, and needs rather pressing than proving; and therefore I may be pardoned if the demonstrations of the point be handled as well in the character of motives to, as of reasons for, the duty. This will spare work in the application. FIRST. Then I shall adduce some reasons why the Christian should have especial care to keep on the breastplate of righteousness; that is, to exhibit the power of a holy and righteous life. SECOND. I shall mention several instances wherein specially every Christian is to express the power of a holy and righteous life. THIRD. I shall lay down some directions, by way of counsel and help, to all those who desire to maintain the power of holiness and righteousness in their daily walking. These several branches we now proceed to take up in their order, applying them at the close.

BRANCH FIRST.

[Reasons why the Christian should have care
to keep on his breastplate.]

I shall adduce some reasons why the Christian should have especial care to keep on the breastplate of righteousness;--that is, exhibit the power of a holy and righteous life.

First. In regard of God, whose great design is, to have his people 'a holy people.' Second. In regard of Satan, whose design is as much against the saints' holiness as God is for it. Third. In regard of holiness itself, the incomparable excellency of which commands us to pursue it.

[God's great design--his people's holiness.]

Reason First. In regard of God, whose great design is, to have his people 'a holy people.' This is enough to oblige, yea to provoke, every Christian to promote what God hath so strongly set upon his heart to effect. He deserves to be cashiered that endeavours not to pursue what his general declares to be his design; and he to have his name blotted out of Christ's muster-roll whose heart stands not on tiptoes ready to march, yea to run, on his design. It is an honourable epitaph which Paul sets on the memory of David, long before deceased, that he, 'in his own generation served the will of God,' Acts 13:36. He made it the business of his life to carry on God's designs: and all gracious hearts touched with the same loadstone of God's love stand to the same point. All the private ends of a sincere soul are swallowed up in this, that he may 'do the will of God in his generation.' This he heartily prays for, 'Thy will be done.' This is his study--to find what is the 'good and acceptable will of God,' which is the very cause why he loves the Bible above all the books of the world beside, because in none but that can he find what is the mind and will of God

concerning him. Now I shall endeavour to show that this is the great design of God to have his people holy. It runs like a silver thread through all God's other designs.

First. It appears in his very decrees, which--so far as they are printed and exposed to our view in the Scripture--we may safely look into. What was God driving at in his electing some out of the lump of mankind? was it only their impunity he desired, that while others were left to swim in torment and misery, they should only be exempted from that infelicity? No, sure. The apostle will tell us more. 'He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy,' Eph. 1:4. Mark, not because he foresaw that they would be of themselves 'holy,' but 'that they should be holy;' this was what God resolved he would make them to be. It was as if some curious workman, seeing a forest of trees growing upon his own ground--all alike, not one better than another--should mark some above all the rest, and set them apart in his thoughts, as resolving to make some rare pieces of workmanship out of them. Thus God chose some out of the lump of mankind, whom he set apart for this purpose--to carve his own image upon them, which consists in 'righteousness and true holiness'--a piece of such rare workmanship, that when God hath finished it, and shall show it to men and angels, it will appear to exceed the fabric of heaven and earth itself.

Second. It was his design in sending his Son into the world. It could be no small occasion that brought him hither. God wants not servants to go on his ordinary errands. The glorious angels, who behold his face continually, are ready to fly wherever he sends them. But here God had a work to do of such importance, that he would put trust, not in his servants, but [in] his Son alone to accomplish. Now, what God's design was in this great work will appear by knowing what Christ's was, for they--both Father and Son--were agreed what should be done before he came upon the stage of action.

See therefore the very bottom of Christ's heart in this his great undertaking opened. He 'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Titus 2:14. Had man kept his primitive righteousness, Christ's pain and pains had been spared. It was man's lost holiness he came to recover. It had not been an enterprise becoming the greatness and holiness of such a one as the Son of God to engage for less than this.

Both God and man, between whom Christ comes to negotiate, call for holiness--God's glory and man's happiness; neither of which can be attained except holiness be restored to man. Not God's glory, who, as he is glorious in the holiness of his own nature and works, so is he glorified by the holiness of his people's hearts and lives. Were it possible --which is the height of all blasphemy to think--that the holiness of God could be separated from any of his attributes or works, God himself would cease to be glorious; his sovereignty would degenerate into tyranny, his wisdom into craft, his justice into cruelty, &c.

Now the glory of all God's attributes and works resulting from his holiness in them all; it follows, that then we glorify God, when we give him the glory of his holiness, and who but a holy creature will or can do that? While man stands under the power of sin, how can he give God the glory of that which his own sinful nature makes him defy and hate God for? Had Christ's therefore been to procure man a pardon, and not to restore his lost holiness, he had been but a minister of sin's, and instead of bringing glory to God, had set sin in the throne, and only obtained a liberty for the creature to dishonour God without control.

Again, man's happiness could not have been obtained without a recovery of his lost holiness. Man's happiness stands in his likeness to God, and his fruition of God. He must have the first before he can enjoy the latter; he must be like God before God can take any liking in him. And God must take full content in

man, before he admits him to the enjoyment of himself, which that he may do, Christ undertakes to make his people 'holy as God is holy.' You see now what was the great design that the heart of Christ was so full with, to 'make us a holy people.'

Well therefore may the apostle bring in that heavy charge against all unholy professors, which he doth with tears, 'that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,' Php. 3:18. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. The loose unholy walker--he goes about to destroy the work of Christ. The Lord Jesus lays down his heart's blood to redeem souls out of the hand of sin and Satan, that they may be free to serve God, without fear, in holiness; and the loose Christian, if I may call him so, 'denies the Lord that bought him,' and delivers up himself basely unto his old bondage, from which Christ had ransomed him with so great a sum. Whose heart doth not tremble at such horrid ingratitude?

Third. It is God's great design, in the regenerating work of the Spirit on the hearts of his people, to make them righteous, and to fit them to walk holily before him, Eze. 36:26,27, where God promiseth 'a new heart,' and to 'put his Spirit into them.' And why will he do this? that he may cause them to 'walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them.' An old heart would have served well enough to have done the devil's drudgery withal. But God intending them for more high and noble employment, to lift up their head out of sin's prison, and prefer them to his own service, therefore he throws away their jail-clothes, and beautifies them with the graces of his Spirit, that their hearts suit their work. When God ordered the temple to be built with such curious care and costly materials, he declared that he intended it for holy use. That however was not so glorious as the spiritual temple of a regenerate heart is, which is the 'workmanship' of God himself, Eph. 2:10. And for what intent reared by him? If we read on we may see, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' This accents the unrighteousness and unholiness of a saint with a circumflex; it lays a deeper aggravation I mean upon his sin, than others', because committed against such a work of the Spirit as none have in the world besides. A sin acted in the temple was greater than if the same had been committed by a Jew in his private dwelling, because the temple was a consecrated place. The saint is a consecrated person, and, by acts of unrighteousness, he profanes God's temple. The sin of another is theft, because he robs God of the glory due to him; but the sin of a saint is sacrilege, because he robs God of that which is devoted to him in an especial manner. Better not to repent at all than to repent of our repentance. 'Better not to vow' and dedicate ourselves to him, and after this to inquire how we may evade and repeal this act. Such a one tells the world he finds some 'iniquity in God,' that alters the opinion and practice formerly taken up by him. In a word, the saint is not only by the Spirit consecrated to God, but is by him indued with a new life from God: 'you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. 2:1. A noble principle of high extraction hath been given you on a high design, that you should live up to that principle in righteousness and holiness. When God breathed a rational soul into man, he intended not that he should live with the beasts, and as the beasts; nor that thou shouldst have thy conversation as a mere carnal man doth; but that 'as thou hast received Christ, so thou shouldst walk in him,' Col. 2:6.

The apostle blames the Corinthians for living below themselves, and like the poor-spirited men of the world, in their corrupt passions. 'Are ye not carnal,...and walk as men?' I Cor. 3:3. When thou, Christian, actest unholy, thou sinnest at a high rate indeed. Others sin against the light of God in their consciences. That is the furthest they can go. But thou sinnest against the life of God in thy very heart. The more unnatural any act is, the more horrid. It is unnatural for a man to be cruel to his own flesh; for a woman to go about to kill the child in her womb. O how your ears tingle at such a flagitious[2] act! What then art thou going to do, when, by thy unholy walking, thou art killing the babe of grace in thy soul? Is Herod marked

for a bloody man that would have butchered Christ newly born in the world, and canst thou, without horror, attempt the murdering of Christ newly formed in thy heart?

Fourth. It is the great design God drives at in his word and ordinances, to make his people holy and righteous. The word of God--it is both seed to beget, and food to nourish, holiness begotten in the heart. Every part of it contributes to this design abundantly. The preceptive part affords a perfect rule of holiness for the saint to walk by, not accommodated to the humours of any, as man's laws are. These make their laws to fit the crooked minds of men, as tailors their garments to fit the crooked bodies they are [designed] for. The commands of God gratify the lusts of none. They are suited to the holy nature of God, not the unholy hearts of men. The promises present us with admirable encouragements to toll^[3] and allure us on in the way of holiness. All of them [are] so warily laid, that an unholy heart cannot, without violence to his conscience, lay claim to any of them--God having set that flaming sword, conscience, in the sinner's bosom, to keep him off from touching or tasting the fruit of this tree of life--and if any profane heart be so bold, while he is walking in the ways of unrighteousness, as to finger any of the treasure that is locked up in the promises, it doth not long stay in their hands, but God, sooner or later, makes them throw it away as Judas his 'thirty pieces'--their consciences telling them they are not the right owners. False comforts from the promises, like riches, which Solomon speaks of, 'make themselves wings and fly away' from the unholy wretch, when he thinks he is most sure of them. Again the threatenings--the minatory^[4] part of the word--this runs like a devouring gulf on either side of the narrow path of holiness and righteousness, ready to swallow up every soul that walks not therein. 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,' Rom. 1:18. To the promissory and minatory is annexed the exemplary part of the word, as Bible instances to confirm our faith concerning truth and certainty of both. The promises--they are backed with the example of holy men and women, who have beaten the path of holiness for us, and 'through faith and patience' in their holy course, have at last 'obtained' the comfort of 'the promises' in heaven's bliss, to the unspeakable encouragement of all that are ascending the hill after them. To the threatenings are annexed many sad examples of unholy souls who have undone themselves, and damned their own souls in unholy ways--whose carcasses are, as it were, thrown upon the shore of the word, and exposed to our view in reading and hearing of it, that we may be kept from being engulfed in those sins that were their perdition. 'These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted,' I Cor. 10:6.

Thus we see how the whole composition of the Scripture befriends holiness, and speaks what the design of God therein is, to carry on which the more strongly, God hath appointed many holy ordinances to quicken the word upon our hearts. Indeed all of them are but the word in several forms; hearing, prayer, sacraments, meditation, and holy conference. The word is the subject-matter of them all; only, as a wise physician, doth prepare the same drug several ways--sometimes to be taken one way, sometimes another--to make it more effectual, and [to] refresh his patient with variety; so the Lord, consulting our weakness, doth by his word, administering it to us now in this, and anon in that ordinance, for our greater delight and profit, aiming still at the same end in all, even the promoting of holiness in the hearts and lives of his people. And what are they all, but as veins and arteries by which Christ conveys the life-blood and spirits of holiness into every member of his mystical body? The church is the garden, Christ is the fountain, [and] every ordinance, as a pipe from him, to water all the beds in his garden. And why? but to make them more abundant in the fruits of righteousness.

Fifth. It is his design in all his providences. 'All things'--that is all providences especially--'work together for good to them that love God,' Rom. 8:28. And how do they work for their good, but by making them more

good and more holy? Providences are good and evil to us, as they find, or make us, better or worse. Nothing is good to him that is evil. As makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest--the frost and cold of the winter, as well as the heat of the summer--so doth he, of fair and foul, pleasing and unpleasing providences, for promoting holiness. winter providences kill the weeds of lust, and summer providences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness. When he afflicts it is for our profit, to make us partakers of his holiness, Heb. 12:10. Afflictions Bernard compares to the teasel[5], which, though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well that he had rather see a hole than a spot in his child's garments. When he deals more gently in his providences, and lets his people under the sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, it is to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness. Paul understood this, when he besought the saints at Rome, 'by the mercies of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,' Rom. 12:1, implying that mercies came from God to us on this very errand, and that God might reasonably expect a such a return. The husbandman, when he lays his compost on the ground, looks to receive it at harvest again in a fuller crop; and so doth God, by his mercies. Therefore doth he so vehemently complain of Israel's ingratitude, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal,' Hosea 2:8. God took it ill, and well might he, that they should entertain Baal at his cost. If God sends in any cheer to us, he would have us know that it is for his own entertainment, he means to come and sup upon his own charge. And what dish is it that pleaseth God's palate? Surely he would not have his people eat of any unclean thing, will not himself. They are the pleasant fruits of holiness and righteousness which Christ comes into his garden to feed on: 'I am come into my garden, my sister, [my] spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk,' Song 5:1.

[The power of holiness to be maintained

because of Satan's design against it.]

Second Reason. There is a reason in regard of Satan, whose design is as much against the saints' holiness, as God is for it. He hath ever a nay to God's yea. If God be for holiness, he must needs be against it. And what should be our chief care to defend, but that which Satan's thoughts and plots are most laid to assault and storm? There is no creature the devil delights to lodge and dwell in as man. When he enters into other creatures it is but on a design against man. When he entered the 'serpent,' it was to deceive Eve. The 'swine,' Matt. 8:32, he possessed on a design to dispossess the Gergesenes of the gospel. But, might he choose his own lodging, none pleaseth him but man. And why? Because man only is capable, by his rational soul, of sin and unrighteousness. And as he prefers man to quarter in above all inferior creatures, so he had rather possess the souls of men than their bodies. None but the best room in the house will serve this unclean spirit in which to vomit his blasphemies, and spit out his malice against God--and why? but because the soul is the proper seat of holiness and sin. This, one gives as the reason why, amongst all the ways that Satan plagued Job, he did not choose to make a forcible entry into his body, and possess him corporally; for certainly he might --that being short of taking away his life--the only thing reserved by God out of his commission, and being in his power, sure it was not to spare Job that trouble. No pity dwells in a devil's heart. But the very reason seems to be what an ancient hath noted. The devil waited for a higher preferment; he hoped for to possess his soul, which he longed for a thousand times more. He had rather hear Job himself blaspheme God, while he was compos mentis--his own man, than himself in Job to belch out blasphemies against God, which would have been the devil's own sin, and

not Job's.

Thus, you see, it is holiness and righteousness his spite is at. No gain comes to the devil's purse, no victory he counts got, except he can make the Christian lose his holiness. He can allow a man to have anything, or be anything, rather than be truly, powerfully, holy. It is not your riches and worldly enjoyments he grudges, so much as your holiness. Job, for aught we know, might have enjoyed his flocks and herds, his children, and servants, without any disturbance from hell, if the devil had not seen him to be a godly man--'one fearing God and eschewing evil.' This angered the wicked spirit. Now he tries a fall with Job, that, if possible, he may unsaint him, and despoil him of his breastplate of righteousness. His plundering of his estate, butchering his children, carbonading[6], as I may say, his body with sores and boils--which were as so many deep slashes in his flesh--was but like some thieves' cruel usage of men whom they would rob, on a design to make them confess and deliver up their treasure. Would but Job have thrown the devil his purse--his integrity, I mean --and let Satan carry away his good conscience, Satan would have soon unbound him, and not have cared if he had his estate and children again. The wolf tears the fleece, that he may come to raven on the flesh, and suck the blood of the sheep. The life-blood of holiness is that which this hellish murderer longs to suck out of the Christian's heart. It is not a form of godliness, or goodly shows of righteousness, the devil maligns, but the power. Not the name, but the new nature itself, brings this lion fell out of his den. Satan can live very peaceably as a quiet neighbour by the door of such as will content themselves with an empty name of profession, this alters not his property, nor toucheth his copy-hold[7]. The profession made by Judas, Satan knew, did not put him a step out of his way to hell. The devil can show a man a way to damnation, through duties and ordinances of God's worship. That covetous traitorous heart which Judas carried with him to hear Christ's sermon, and [to] preach his own, held him fast enough to the devil, and therefore he gives him line enough, liberty enough, to keep his credit awhile with his fellow-apostles. He cares not though others think him a disciple of Christ, so he knows him to be his own slave.

In a word, it is not a superstitious holiness which offends him. How can it, when he is the instituter of it himself, and that on a subtle design to undermine the true genuine holiness in the hearts of men? And by this time the church of Christ hath found how deep a contrivance it is. This in all ages hath been to the power of holiness what the ivy is to the oak. The wanton embraces of this mock holiness round about religion, hath killed the heart of scriptural holiness wherever it hath prevailed. It is to the true holiness as the concubine is to the true wife, who is sure to draw the husband's love from her. This brat the devil hath long put out to nurse to the Romish church, which hath taken a great deal of pains to bring it up for him, and no wonder, when she is so well paid for its maintenance--it having brought her in so much worldly treasure and riches. No, it is holiness in its naked simplicity, as it is founded on scripture-bottom, and guided by scripture-rule, that he is a sworn enemy against. Indeed, this is the flag which the soul hangs out, and by which it gives defiance to the devil; no wonder if he strives to shoot it down. Now, and not till now, the creature really declares himself a friend to God, and an enemy to the kingdom of darkness; and here is the ground of that quarrel, which will never cease so long as he continues an unclean spirit, and they to be the holy ones of God. 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,' II Tim. 3:12.

Mark, what it is that makes the devil and his instruments take arms and breathe slaughter against Christians--it is their godliness. Many specious pretenses persecutors have to disguise their malice; but the Spirit of God, that looks through all their hypocritical mufflers, is privy to the cabinet-counsels of their hearts, and those instructions they have from the devil, which worketh so mightily in them. He tells us, he

that will live godly shall be persecuted. Downright godliness is the butt they level their arrows at.

Again, observe the kind of godliness at which their blood rises, 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus.' There are more sorts of holiness and godliness than one. But all may have fair quarter at the devil's hands, except this godliness in Christ Jesus. The devil hath an implacable malice against Christ. He hates, as I may so say, every letter of his name. That godliness which is learned of him, and derived from him, he opposeth unto death. Christian blood is sweeter to his tooth, but the blood of the Christian's godliness is far sweeter. He had rather, if he could, kill that, than them--rather draw the Christian from his godliness, than butcher him for it; yet, that he may not stand out, he will play at small game, and express his cruelty upon their bodies, but it is only when he cannot come at their souls. 'They were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain,' Heb. 11:37. That which these bloody men principally desired, was to draw them into sin, and make apostates of them; and therefore they tempted them before they slew them. The devil accounts that the complete victory--when he can despoil them of their armour, and bribe them from their steadfastness in their holy profession. 'Let her be defiled, and let her eye look upon Zion,' Micah 4:11. He had rather see saints defiled with unrighteousness and sin than defiled with their blood and gore. Persecution, he hath learned, doth but mow the church, which afterward comes up thicker for it; it is unholiness that ruins it. Persecutors do but plough God's field for him, while he is sowing it with the blood that they let out; but profaneness--that roots it up, and lays it all waste, consciences and churches also.

[The power of holiness to be maintained

because of its own excellency.]

Third Reason. There is a reason in regard of holiness itself--the incomparable excellency whereof commands us to pursue it, and endeavour after it, with our utmost care and strength.

First. It is an excellency peculiar to the rational creature. Inferior creatures have a goodness proper to them; but intellectual beings only are capable of an inward holiness. God saw every creature he made to be 'good;' only angels and man to be 'holy.' And if we part with holiness that is our crown, we become worse than the beasts themselves; yea, it is holiness and righteousness that makes one man differ from another in God's account. We go by a false rate, when we value men by their external advantages. All stand on a level as to God, till holiness be superadded. Princes, in whom is seated the sovereign power, claim as their prerogative to set the just value on all coin--what every piece shall go for; this a penny, and that a pound. Much more surely then doth it belong to God to rate his creatures. And he tells us, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. 12:26 'The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth,' Prov. 10:20. The Spirit of God compares the righteous to silver and gold, the most precious of metals, which above all other metals are of such account, that only money made of silver and gold is current in all countries; holiness will go in both worlds; but external excellencies, such as worldly riches, honours, &c., like leather and brass money, are of no esteem, save in this beggarly lower world.

Second. It is holiness that is, though not our plea, yet our evidence for heaven. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Heaven is a city where righteousness dwells. Though God suffer the earth to bear for a while unholy men--which it doth not without sweating under their weight, and groaning to be rid of the load--yet sure he will never pester heaven with such a crew. Before Enoch was translated to heaven, he walked holily with God on earth; which made God desire his company so soon. O friends! do we like an empty profession? such a religion as will leave us short of heaven? or can we reasonably expect a

dispensation above others, that we should commence glorified creatures in heaven, without keeping our acts, and performing the exercises of godliness which God hath laid upon those that will stand candidates for that place? Certainly, what God hath written in his word, as to this, shall stand. He will not make a blot in his decrees for any; which he should, did he alter the method of salvation in the least. Either, therefore, we must renounce our hopes of going thither, or resolve to walk in the path of holiness, that will lead us thither. That is vain breath which sets not the sails of our affections a-going, and our feet a-travelling thither, where we would be at last.

Third. It is holiness, and that maintained in its power, that capacitates us for communion with God in this life. Communion with God is so desirable, that many pretend to it, who know not what it means; like some that brag of their acquaintance with such a great man, who, may be, never saw his face, nor have been admitted into his company. The Spirit of God gives the lie to that man who saith he hath any acquaintance with God, while he keeps his acquaintance with any unrighteousness: 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie,' I John 1:6. The apostle is willing to pass for a loud liar himself, if he walks in darkness, and pretends to have fellowship with God. How can they 'walk together' that are not 'agreed?' Communion is founded on union, and union upon likeness. And how like are God and the devil, holiness and unrighteousness, one to the other? There is a vast difference between conversing with ordinances, and having communion with God. A man may have great acquaintance with ordinances, and be a great stranger to God at the same time. Every one that goes to court, and hangs about the palace, doth not speak with the prince. And what sorry things are ordinances without this communion with God? Ordinances are as it were the exchange, where holy souls trade with God by his Spirit for heavenly treasures, from which they come filled and enriched with grace and comfort. Now, what does the unholy wretch? truly like some idle persons that come and walk among merchants on the exchange, but have no business there, or commerce whereby they get any advantage. An unholy heart hath no dealings with God; he takes no notice of God. May be, to be sure, God takes no such notice of him, as to communicate himself graciously to him. Nay, suppose a person habitually holy, but under the power of some temptation for the present, whereby he defiles himself; he is in this case unfit to have any friendly communion with God. 'A righteous man falling down before the wicked is,' saith Solomon, 'as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring,' Prov. 25:26; much more is he so when he falls down before the wicked one, and yields to his temptation--now his spirit is roil [i.e. turbid] and muddied. And if we will not use the water of a spring, though in itself pure and wholesome, when it is troubled, or drink of that vessel that runs thick, but stay while [i.e. until] it be settled and comes clear; can we wonder if God refuseth to taste of those duties which a godly person performs, before the stream be cleared by the renewing of his repentance for his sin?

Fourth. Holiness in the power of it is necessary to the true peace and repose of the soul. I do not say that our peace is bottomed on the righteousness of our nature or holiness of our lives, yet it is ever attended with these. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' We may as soon make the sea always still, as an unholy heart truly quiet. From whence come the intestine wars in men's bosoms, that set them at variance with themselves, but from their own lusts? these break the peace, and keep the man in a continual tempest.

As the spirit of holiness comes into his heart, and the sceptre of Christ--which is 'a sceptre of righteousness'--bears sway in the life; so the storm abates more and more, till it be quite down, which will not be while we are short of heaven. There only is perfect rest, because perfect holiness. Whence those frights and fears, which make them a magor missabib--a terror round about?--they wake and sleep with the scent of hell-fire about them continually. O, it is their unholy course and unrighteous ways that walk in

their thoughts, as John's ghost in Herod's.

This makes men discontented in every condition. They neither can relish the sweetness of their enjoyments, nor bear the bitter taste of their afflictions. I know there are ways to stupefy the conscience, and bind up for a time the senses of an unholy heart, that it shall not feel its own misery; but the virtue of this opium is soon spent, and then the wretch is upon the rack again, and his horror returns upon him with a greater paroxysm. An example whereof I have heard. A notorious drunkard, who used, when told of his ungodly life, to shake off, as easily as Paul did the viper from his hand, all the threatenings of the word that his friends would have fastened on his conscience--bearing himself upon a presumptuous hope of the mercy of God in Christ: it pleased God to lay him, some while after, on his back by sickness; which, for a time, scared his old companions--brethren with him in iniquity--from visiting him; but hearing he was cheery and pleasant in his sickness, they ventured again to see him; doing so, they found him very confident of the mercy of God (whereby their hands were much strengthened in their old ways); but before he died, this tune was changed to purpose; his vain hopes vanished, his guilty conscience awakened, and the poor wretch, roasted in the scorching flames of his former ungodly practices, and now ready to die, cries out despairingly, 'O sirs!

I had prepared a plaster, and thought all was well, but now it will stick no longer.' His guilty conscience rubbed it off as fast as he clapped it on. And truly, friends, you will find that the blood of Christ himself will not cleave to a soul that is in league with any way of sin and unrighteousness. God will pluck such from the horns of his altar, that flee to it, but not from their unrighteousness, and will slay them in the sight of the sanctuary they so boldly trust to. You know the message Solomon sent to Adonijah, 'If thou showest thyself a worthy man, not a hair of thy head shall fall; but if wickedness shall be found in thee, thou shalt surely die.'

In vain do men think to shroud themselves under Christ's wing from the hue and cry of their accusing conscience, while wickedness finds a sanctuary in them. Christ never was intended by God to secure men in their unrighteousness, but to save them from it.

Fifth. Holiness has a mighty influence upon others. When this appears with power in the lives of Christians, it works mightily upon the spirits of men; it stops the mouths of the ungodly, who are ready to reproach religion, and to throw the dirt of professors' sins on the face of profession itself. They say that frogs will cease croaking when a light is brought near unto them. The light of a holy conversation hangs as it were a padlock on profane lips; yea, it forceth them to acknowledge God in them. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,' Matt. 5:16. Yea more, this would not only stop their mouths, but be a means to open their very hearts to the embracing of Christ and his grace.

One reason why such shoals of souls came into the net of the gospel in primitive times was, because then the divinity of the gospel doctrine appeared in the divinity and holiness of Christians' lives. Justin Martyr, when converted, professed, 'That the holiness that shined in Christians' lives and patience, that triumphed over their enemies' cruelty at their deaths, made him conclude the doctrine of the gospel was truth.' Yea, Julian himself, vile wretch as he was, could say, that the Christian religion came to be propagated so much, 'propter Christianorum erga omnes beneficia--because Christians were a people that did good to all, and hurt to none.'

I am sure we find, by woeful experience, that in these debauched times, wherein religion is so bespattered with frequent scandals, yea, a common looseness of professors, it is hard to get any that are out to come under the net of the gospel. Some beasts there are, that if they have once blown upon a pasture, others will hardly eat of the grass for some while after. Truly I have had some such sad thoughts as these concerning our unhappy times; that, till the ill favour, which the pride, contentions, errors, and looseness of professors now-a-days, have left upon the truths and ordinances of Christ be worn off, there is little hope of any great comings in of new converts.

The minister cannot be always preaching. Two or three hours, may be, in a week, he spends among his people in the pulpit, holding the glass of the gospel before their faces; but the lives of professors, these preach all week long. If they were but holy and exemplary, they would be as a repetition of the preacher's sermon to the families and neighbours among whom they converse, and would keep the sound of his doctrine continually ringing in their ears. This would give Christians an admirable advantage in doing good to their carnal neighbours, by counsel and reproof, which is now seldom done, and when done, it proves to little purpose, because not backed with their own exemplary walking.

'It behoves him,' saith Tertullian, 'that would counsel or reprove another, to guard his speech--*autoritate propriæ conversationis, ne dicta factis deficientibus erubescant*--with the authority of his own conversation, lest, wanting that, what he says may put himself to the blush.' We do not love that one that hath the stinking breath should come very near us; and truly we count one comes very near us that reproves us. Such therefore had need have a sweet-scented life. Reproofs are good physic, but they have an unpleasing farewell.

It is hard for men not to vomit them up on the face of him that gives them. Now nothing is more powerful to keep a reproof from thus coming up, than the holiness of the person that reproves. 'Let the righteous smite me,' saith David, 'it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head,' Ps. 141:5. See how well it is taken from such a hand, because of the authority that holiness carries with it. None but a vile wretch will smite a righteous man with reproach, for smiting him with a reproof, especially if it be softly laid on, and like oil fomented, and wrought into him, as it should, with compassion and love to his soul. Thus we see how influential the power of holiness would be unto the wicked. Neither would it be less upon our brethren and fellow-Christians.

When one Christian sees holiness sparkle in the life of another he converses with, he shall find his own grace spring within him, as the babe in Elizabeth at the salutation of Mary. Truly one eminently holy is enough to put life into a whole society; on the contrary, the error or looseness of one professor, endangers the whole company that are acquainted with him. Therefore we have so strict a charge--'Follow peace with all men, and holiness;...looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled,' Heb. 12:14. It is spoken to professors. The heathen's drunkenness, uncleanness, unrighteous walking did not so much endanger them. But, when 'a root of bitterness springs up' among professors themselves, this hazards the defiling of many. A scab on the wolf's back is not so dangerous to the sheep --because they will not be easily drawn among such company; but, when it gets into the flock, among professors that feed together, pray, hear, and walk in fellowship together, then is there fear it will spread. A loose erroneous professor doth the devil more service in his kind, than a whole troop of such as pretend to no religion. The devil gets no credit by them. There are many errors and sinful practices which have long lain upon his hands, and he could n

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-gurnall/the-christian-in-complete-armor-part-9/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net