

# A PLEA FOR THE GODLY

by Thomas Watson

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*Thomas Watson's treatise contrasting the excellence of righteous persons with the wicked, describing their superior wisdom, spirit, conduct, prayers, and eternal destiny.*

5 Chapters

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## 01 - A Plea for the Godly

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From A Plea for the Godly. by Thomas Watson A Plea for the Godly "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." Proverbs 12:26

Solomon was a man of renown. He was the world's wonder; he discoursed of trees from the cedar-tree in Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall. The Proverbs are profound and holy aphorisms, inspired by the Spirit of God and penned by him who was both a king and a preacher. A great part of this book is to set forth the differences between the godly and the wicked, the happiness of the one and the misery of the other. The text is spoken in the eulogium and commendation of a righteous man: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor."

I begin with the first word, "righteous." There is a twofold righteousness:

1. A civil righteousness; and so he is righteous who is adorned with the moral virtues: prudence, justice, and temperance; who keeps free from penal statutes and does not dash upon the rock of visible scandal. This righteousness is valid in man's court, but is insufficient to salvation. Under the fair leaves of civility, the worm of unbelief may be hid. Many a person decked with morality is now descended into hell. A bull may be tied with ribbons and wear a garland on his head, yet go to the slaughter. However, for the honor of this age, it were to be wished that there were more civil righteousness to be found in the world.

2. There is a gospel-righteousness, which is first a righteousness imputed, namely, when Christ's righteousness is made over to us. In Adam we were all criminal persons, in whom "all have sinned," Romans 5:12. If the head plots treason, all the body is guilty; "but Christ is made to us righteousness," 1 Corinthians 1:30. Indeed, it is only in this righteousness which we can stand before the justice of God. This is the name whereby He shall be called, "The Lord our righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6. This righteousness is a coat without seam which not only covers but adorns us. This is as truly ours to justify as it is Christ's to bestow.

There is a righteousness imparted, which is the infusing the seed and habit of grace in the soul, making a person internally holy. And so he is said to be righteous who has a change of heart wrought in him and is transformed by the renewing of his mind, Romans 12:2. Such a one, though he is not another man, yet he is a new man, 2 Corinthians 5:17. The faculties are not new but the qualities are, as the strings of a violin are the same but the tune is altered.

1. Righteousness is extensive in the subject; it has a spreading virtue. "The God of peace sanctify you wholly," 1 Thessalonians 5:23. A child of God is re-generate in every part though but in part.

2. "He is more excellent." Excellency is the en-nobling of a person, or a gradual elevation of him above others. The righteous man is more excellent; that is, he is a better man. The word for "excellent", in the Hebrew and Italian signifies abundant. It is as if the Spirit of God had said, "The righteous has more abundant worth in him, more intrinsical goodness." 3. "Than his neighbor." "Neighbor" is not to be taken here strictly for one who lives in a vicinity and is nearly situated, but

by neighbor is meant anyone who is unrighteous, and does not have the fear of God before his eyes. The text has two general parts:

1. The subject, "the righteous."
2. The predicate, "he is more excellent than his neighbor."

Solomon seems, as it were, to put the righteous and the wicked in a pair of scales; the one weighs as weighty gold; the other weighs lighter than the dust of the balance.

DOCTRINE. He who is truly righteous is far more excellent than any wicked person in the world whatsoever. I say "truly righteous" to exclude the hypocrite who has a form and slight tincture of piety, but knows not "the grace of God in truth," Colossians 1:6. He has nothing of religion but the name, and religion often suffers by him. But he who is really righteous is the excellent person and has a superiority to all others. For the illustrating of the proposition, I shall do two things. I shall show:

First, how the righteous man is more excellent.

Second, why the righteous man is more excellent

## 02 - How Righteous More Excellent

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From A Plea for the Godly. by Thomas Watson A Plea for the Godly (cont'd) 1. How a righteous man is more excellent than another. This appears three ways in respect of:

1. What he is.
2. What he has.
3. What he shall have.

1. What He Is A righteous man is more excellent than a wicked in respect of what he is.

1. He is more richly endued with wisdom. He is of a dexterous sagacity, mixing the serpent's prudence with the dove's innocence. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things," 1 Corinthians 2:15. As the soul in the eye is the cause why it sees, so the Spirit of God in the mind is the cause why it savingly understands. The anointing of the Holy Ghost is irradiating; it clears a Christian's eyesight. "The same unction teacheth you all things," 1 John 2:27. The saints are compared to wise virgins. Sensualists often have a greater reach in matters of the world but they have no insight into the deep things of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. A swine may see an acorn under the tree but it cannot see a star. David, being divinely illuminated, grew wiser than his teachers, Psalms 119:99. A righteous man is wise:

(1) To know himself. Take the most mercurial wit, the most subtle politician who is able to dive into the mysteries of state, yet he is ignorant of his own heart. There are those meanders and sophisms, those intrinsic pollutions, that he cannot find out He dresses himself by the mirror of self-love. He does not see the evil that is in him, nor will he believe it. Hazael could not imagine he should be so bad when he came to be king, 2 Kings 8:13. But a spiritually-enlightened soul sees that which the natural man does not. He sees legions of vain thoughts. He sees how his grace is choked with corruption, his humility is stained with pride, his faith mixed with unbelief. His very duties are but shining sins. He sees so much of his heart that he dare not trust it.

(2) A righteous man is wise to know Jesus Christ. The natural man hears of Christ by the hearing of the ear but he does not know Him. What, is your beloved more than another beloved? Those who journeyed with Paul heard a voice but saw no man, Acts 9:7. So the unregenerate person hears the minister set forth Christ as altogether lovely; he hears a voice but sees no man. He does not see Christ's orient beauties. Christ is a treasure, but a hidden treasure. But a gracious soul has the veil taken off; he sees the amazing excellencies of Christ. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," 2 Peter 2:7. His merits, graces, and benefits are precious. A righteous man has Christ's eye-salve to see his tried gold, Revelation 3:1-22. Zeuxis, having drawn a curious piece, Nicostratus fell into the admiration of it and commended it. An ignorant man stood by and asked him what rare excellency he saw in that piece. Said he, "If you could see with my eyes, you would admire it as well as I." So, if a carnal man could see with a spiritual man's eyes, he would wonder at those surpassing beauties in Jesus Christ which he now makes light of.

(3) A righteous man is wise to discern the times. The children of Issachar were men who had understanding of the times. The world cries out, "Glorious times!" but a righteous man has an eye of discernment. He can see when the wicked make void God's law and when religion is crucified by such as cry "hosanna" to it. He is wise to keep from the contagion of the times. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins, Revelation 14:2. A person divinely qualified is wiser than to run himself into snares or go to hell for company; he is wise to salvation. "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

2. A righteous man is of a more excellent birth. Alexander the Great feigned himself to be son to Jupiter. Every good Christian is high-born; he is born of God, and that is more than to come from princes and he of the royal blood. David thought it no small honor to be the king's son-in-law, 1 Samuel 18:18. Oh, what an infinite honor is it to be regenerated by the Spirit and enrolled among the first-born of heaven! The righteous man derives his pedigree from the ancient of days, Daniel 7:9. He gives the fairest nameplate, the eagle and the lion; he is near akin to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Isaiah 40:31.

3. A righteous person is of a more excellent beauty. How worldly beauty is courted by all, and what is it? "Beauty is vain," Proverbs 31:30. The bravest features of the body and the most lovely complexion are no other than well-colored earth. But a righteous person has a celestial beauty shining in him. He is embellished with knowledge, love, and meekness, which are of such oriental splendor as to allure the very angels. A good Christian has sonic idea and re-semblance of that sparkling holiness which is iii the Deity. Christ is infinitely taken with the spiritual beauty of His church. "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem," Song of Solomon 6:4, Tirzah was a map of pleasure- Jerusalem was the metropolis of Judea, the star and light of all the eastern world. This was symbolic, to set forth the radiance of the church's glory. "Turn away thine eyes from me for they have overcome me." verse 5. It is as if Christ had said, "Oh, My spouse, such a resplendent luster is in your visage that I can hardly bear it. I am wounded with the delightful darts of your beauty!" One eye of a believer draws Christ's heart to it. "Thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes," Song of Solomon 4:9 A saint's beauty never withers; it outlives death. True grace is like colors laid in oil which cannot be washed off.

4. A righteous man's thoughts are more excellent. Thoughts are the firstborn of the soul; sinful thoughts arise out of a bad heart like sparks out of a furnace An unsanctified fancy is Satan's work-house, Micah 2:1. "The thoughts of the righteous are right," Proverbs 12:1-18.~ A righteous man's thoughts have gotten wings and fled Co heaven. 'Then I awake, I am still with Thee," Psalms 139:18. God is a saint's treasure and where should his mind be but upon this treasure? A righteous man has gotten upon the top of Mount Tahoe, solacing himself in Jehovah. He contemplates the beauty of holiness, the love of Christ, the felicity of saints glorified. His thoughts are among the cherubims. The soul, while it is musing on Christ, is filled with holy and sweet raptures. It is caught up into paradise. It is in heaven before its time. My meditation of Him shall be sweet.

5. A righteous man's desires are more excellent. He spreads the sails of his desire to receive the fresh breathings of God's Spirit. I do not deny that a bad man may have some faint aspirings after the best things. Those deserters of Christ cried, "Lord ever-more give us this bread," John 6:34. But a righteous man's desires excel.

He desires Christ for Himself, not only for His jewels but His beauty; not only as He is a Savior but as He is the Holy One, Acts 3:14.

He is unsatisfied without Christ. Not the richest morsels, not golden chalices filled with sapphires or diamonds will content him without Christ. As the two Marys were not satisfied with the linen clothes lying in the sepulcher unless they had seen the body of Jesus, 50 it is not the linen on the communion table or the elements of bread and wine that will satisfy a believer unless he meets with Christ whom his soul loves.

He desires still more of Christ and would be swallowed up in the sweet ocean of His love. Behold here a desire which God Himself has raised in the soul, and He will open the breast of mercy and satisfy it.

6. A righteous man's discourse is more excellent. His tongue is tuned to the language of heaven. What is the discourse of the wicked about? Their wares and drugs, like the fish in the gospel that had a piece of money in its mouth. "He that is of the earth speaketh of the earth," John 3:31. And too often corrupt communication proceeds from the wicked, their mouth being like a sink where all the filth of the house runs out. These lepers need to have their lips covered.

Sinners, in their ordinary discourse, bring forth Scripture as the Philistines did Sampson to make sport, as if the Bible were the best minstrel to play with, and a jest were worth nothing unless it were seasoned with the salt of the sanctuary. It is a saying of Luther, "Whom God has a mind to destroy, He lets them play with Scripture." But in this sense the righteous is more excellent. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver," Proverbs 10:20. Gracious words drop as silver from him to the enriching of the souls of others. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious," Ecclesiastes 10:12. In the Hebrew it is, "they are grace." His words are not as vinegar to fret but as salt to season others, Colossians 4:6. The roof of the mouth is called heaven. A godly man's mouth is full of heaven. He speaks as if he had already been in heaven. The holy conference of the two disciples going to Emmaus brought Christ into their company. "While they communed together, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them," Luke 24:15. Such savory speeches drop from the holy lips that God has a notebook to write them down. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and God hearkened, and a book of remembrance was written," Malachi 3:16. It is reported of Tamerlain (the Mongol conqueror) that he kept a register of the names and good deeds of his soldiers. God registers the speeches of His people that they may not be lost.

7. A righteous man is of a more excellent spirit. An excellent spirit was found in Daniel, Daniel 5:12. "My servant Caleb because he had another spirit with him," Numbers 14:24. "A wicked man hath the spirit of the world," 1 Corinthians 2:12. He is of an atheistic spirit - Lucian is his Old Testament, Machiavel his New - but a person invested with grace has choice-ness of spirit in him. He is of a sublime, noble, invincible spirit.

He is of a sublime spirit; he savors the things of God. A person sublimated by grace sets his feet where others set their hearts. He, being clothed with Christ the Son of righteousness and crowned with the graces as glittering stars, has the moon under him. The world may have his look but Christ has his love; he dwells below but trades in the Jerusalem above. A true saint is taken up about higher matters: getting the love and favor of God. He aspires after glory and immortality; he looks no lower than a crown; he feeds as the birds of paradise on the dew of heaven; he is

employed about angels' work, lifting up God's name in the world; he is a living organ of God's praise.

He is of a noble spirit; he has the spirit of an heir. He scorns anything that is disingenuous and sordid. He can deny himself but not disparage himself. He can be humble but not base. He does not know how to palliate the sins of any, which would be to wash the devil's face. He cannot prostitute him-self to the lusts of men or flatter to get preferment, Job 32:21. A righteous man abhors to be biased from the truth for secular advantage. It was said of Luther that he cared not for gold; his spirit was more noble than to be bribed with money. A good man will not purchase the liberty of his person by ensnaring his conscience. "Not accepting deliverance," Hebrews 1:1-14.

He is of an invincible spirit. He bears afflictions without fainting or fretting though the archers shoot at him. His bow abides in strength. Such as lack a principle of grace faint in the day of adversity; they cannot bear a frown from a great man or digest a reproach. If the bough of a tree is rotten, the least weight hung upon it breaks it. But the righteous has the heart of a lion. He is not startled at the discourtesies of the world. He looks upon reproaches for Christ as badges of honor, 1 Peter 4:11. When the Roman Catholics taunted Luther for his apostasy from their church, Luther replied, "I confess I am an apostate from you, but a blessed one; I am such an apostate as a magician is when he renounces his compact made with the devil and betakes himself to Christ." Grace steels the heart with courage and fires it with zeal.

Nazianzen said of Athanasius that he was both a loadstone and an adamant; a loadstone for the sweetness of his disposition and an adamant for the invincibility of his resolution. When the emperor Valens promised Basil great preferment if he would subscribe to the Arian heresy, Basil responded, "Sir, these speeches are fit to catch little children, but we who are taught by the Spirit are ready to endure a thousand deaths rather than suffer one syllable of Scripture to be altered." A righteous man is willing to take the cross for his jointure and, with Ignatius, wear Christ's sufferings as a collar of pearl. "We glory in tribulation," Romans 5:3. St Paul rattled his chain and gloried in it as a woman who is proud of her jewels, said Chrysostom. "It is to my loss," said Gordius the martyr, if you abate me anything of my sufferings." Of what heroic undaunted spirits were the primitive Christians who could scorn preferments, laugh at imprisonments, snatch up torments as crowns, and whose love to Christ burned hotter than the fire insomuch that the heathens cried out, "Great is the God of the Christians!"

8. The prayers of a righteous man are more excellent. Another may have more elegance in prayer but he has more sincerity. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the up-right is His delight," Proverbs 15:8. A sinner's praying is howling, Hosea 7:14, but the prayer of a righteous man is music in God's ears. "Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice," Song of Solomon 2:14. Maximinius, a persecutor, being on his sick bed, craved the prayers of the godly. The excellency of a righteous man's prayer is seen by its noble exploits and by its gracious returns.

(1) By its noble exploits. Luther's prayer re-covered Theodorus Vitus from a consumption after the physicians had given him over for dead. The prayer of the righteous has stopped the sun in its full career, Joshua 10:13. It has divided the waters, Exodus 14:15, Exodus 14:21; overcome armies, Exodus 17:11; cast out devils, Matthew 17:21; opened prisons, Acts 12:9; shut heaven, James 5:17. Prayer has had power with God, Hosea 12:4. The Tyrians tied fast their god Hercules with a

golden chain. The great Jehovah is held by the prayers of His people. "I will not let Thee go till Thou bless me," said Jacob, Genesis 32:26.

(2) By its gracious return. When the tree of the promise is shaken by the hand of prayer, some fruit falls. "He shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him," Job 33:26. Prayer is the golden fleet the saints send out to heaven which comes home richly laden with mercy. Sometimes God gives His people the same mercy in kind that they beg. "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition," 1 Samuel 1:27. Sometimes God gives them that which is better than they ask for. They pray for temporal things and He gives them spiritual. They pray for more health and He gives them more grace. They desire the venison and, instead of that, He gives them the blessing; so He pays them in a better coin. That which makes the prayer of a righteous man so excellent and availing is:

First, because his affections are drawn forth strongly in prayer; his eyes melt; his heart burns. He is "fervent in spirit," Romans 12:11. It is a metaphor which alludes to water boiling over. A good heart boils over with hot affections in prayer. There may be powder in a gun when there is no fire. Some may have good matter in prayer but no fire of affection to discharge it. Prayer without fervency is like wine that has lost the spirits. Fervency, as Ambrose said, baptizes a duty and gives it a name. Without this, prayer is not prayer. A righteous man is carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot of devotion. This holy fervency is caused by the Spirit of God which both inspires and enflames the saint's prayers, Romans 8:26. The Spirit helps us with sighs and groans. Not only gifts but groans; and surely the incense of a righteous man's prayer with the Holy Ghost's fire put to it must ascend as a sweet perfume to heaven.

Second, a righteous man's prayers are so excellent because he sprinkles faith in every prayer. "Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, O my God I trust in Thee," Psalms 25:1. Faith is the breath of prayer. As the body cannot live without breath, so prayer cannot live unless faith breathes in it. Faith is the bullet which is shot in prayer. A believing prayer can obtain anything from God. It is reported of a nobleman of this nation that the Queen gave him a ring and told him that, when he was in any difficulty, let him send that ring to her and she would assist him. To this ring I compare prayer. When a child of God stands in need of anything, he sends this ring to God, presents it by the hand of faith, and has his desires granted.

Third, a righteous man's prayers are so excellent because Jesus Christ presents them to His Father. Prayer, as it comes from the godly, is mixed with sin, but Christ takes out the dross of their prayers and presents nothing but pure gold. He dips the prayers of the righteous in His blood and mingles them with His sweet odors, and so they are to God most fragrant and aromatic. A weak prayer being laid upon Christ as the altar, the altar sanctifies it. Christ's praying over a saint's prayer makes it prevalent in respect of his office (as He is a priest), His relation (as He is a Son), and His merit (as He is God).

9. The tears of a righteous man are more excellent. Holy tears are the costly gum which distills from the trees of righteousness. Mary Magdalene stood at Christ's feet weeping. Her tears dropped as pearls from her eyes. The tears of the wicked are good for nothing. They are either carnal (they weep for worldly losses) or spurious (they are more troubled for hell than sin). Their conscience is in agony. There is water in their eyes because there is fire in their bones. But the tears of a true penitent are more precious. They drop from the eye of hope. They are purifying

tears. The holy mourner weeps out sin, These tears are the wine of angels. So precious they are that God bottles them. "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle," Psalms 56:8. In the Hebrew it is "my tear," to show that God takes notice of every tear. Though holy tears are silent, yet they have a voice. Though they fall to the earth, yet they reach heaven. Tears dropping from the saints' eyes are as sweet water dropping from the roses.

10. The tears of a righteous man is more excellent for spiritualness and for usefulness.

First, the life of a righteous man is more excellent for spiritualness, and that three ways:

(1) He lives by a more spiritual rule than others. A sinner either lives by no rule or by a false rule. He walks according to the course of the world. But a righteous man goes by the canon of Scripture as a well-made dial goes exactly by the sun. God's Word is the oracle he consults with; it is his pillar of fire or pole-star to direct him. "Thy word is a lantern to my feet," Psalms 119:105. The Word is a divine treatise; it is a model and platform of God's mind to which a pious man conforms his actions both moral and sacred. He will not resolve his faith into councils or fathers, nor will he follow the examples of the best men further than they follow the Word.

(2) A righteous man lives more spiritually as he lives a life above others, whereas they live no higher than reason. The just lives by faith. A righteous man moves in a higher sphere. He penetrates the clouds. Moses saw Him who is invisible. Sense and reason are too low in stature to see Christ. Faith does not climb up into the tree as Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-4), but within the veil, and there sees Jesus. A holy person sends out faith as a spy to view the land of promise; faith unties difficulties. "Who against hope believed in hope," Romans 4:1-2. Against the hope of sense, Abraham believed in hope of the promise. Faith anticipates future things and makes them present. When God told Abraham what a glorious country He would give him, Abraham looked upon it as if it had been actually done and he had taken possession. Faith can live upon God in the deficiency of visible comforts. Although the fig-tree does not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. A righteous man believes that if God will save him from hell, He will save him from want; if He will give him a kingdom, He will not deny him daily bread.

(3) A righteous man lives more spiritually as he shows forth more of the powers of holiness in his life than others. He is a pattern of piety. Aaron, the saint of the Lord, was adorned more by his sanctity more than his mitre or linen garments. A moralist may live as a man, but he who is regenerate lives the life of Christ. The Macedonians, on the birthday of Alexander the Great, wore Alexander's picture about their necks set with gold and pearl. So the righteous carry the lively picture of Christ in their holy example. They live so devoutly as if they had seen the Lord with bodily eyes.

Second, the life of a righteous man is more excellent for usefulness. He is a blessing in the midst of the land. He spends and is spent for Christ; yet he would rather wear out than rust out. The lives of the wicked are unprofitable (therefore they are compared to chaff), and hurtful (therefore compared to thorns). But a righteous man is like the bee or silk-worm, working for the good of others. "It comforts me," said worthy (John) Jewel, "that I have exhausted myself in the labors of my holy calling." A good man hangs between these two as a needle between two loadstones: longing to be with Christ in heaven and loving to serve Him on earth.

(1) A righteous man is helpful to the bodies of others. He is a temporal savior. He has one eye shut to wink at the failings of others and another eye open to observe their wants. He is like the heavens diffusing his influence and sending down his silver drops of charity; he is a staff to the lame and bread to the hungry. He puts under a golden crutch to support others when they are falling. It is reported of young Lord Harrington that he gave a tenth of his yearly revenue to charitable uses. As Mary brought her sweet ointments to anoint Christ's body, so a gracious soul brings his ointments of charity to anoint the saints, who are Christ's living Body. A good man judiciously considers how he himself lives upon contribution: the earth enriches him with veins of silver and crops of corn. One creature brings him wool, another oil, another silk. Observing every creature conspiring for his good, he studies to lay out himself for the good of others. Faith, if it has not works, is dead, James 2:17. Faith sanctifies works and works testify of faith. A believer, with one hand, receives Christ's merits; with the other hand he relieves his fellow members. And he not only gives to the necessities of the poor but gives freely. Charity drops from him as myrrh from the tree. He does not put his alms among his desperate debts; he is thankful that God has made him in the number of givers and not receivers.

(2) A righteous man is helpful to the souls of others. He who pities his neighbor's ox when it is fallen into a pit much more pities his neighbor's soul that is falling into hell. He counsels the ignorant, confirms the weak, reduces the wandering, and converts the sinner from the error of his way.

(3) A righteous man is helpful to a kingdom. He stands as a screen between it and the fire of God's wrath. "Therefore He said He would destroy them, had not Moses his servant stood before Him in the breach to turn away wrath from them," Psalms 106:23. when a breach is made in the wall of a castle, soldiers stand in that breach till the enemy is beaten back. So when the wrath of God was coming against Israel, Moses stood in the breach and, by his prayers, kept it off. The saints are the Atlases who bear up a nation from sinking. The poets feigned of Hector that, as long as he lived, Troy could not be demolished. "I bear up the pillars," Psalms 75:3. Ambrose was called the wall of Italy. Lot, while in Sodom, kept off the fire. "Haste thee, escape to Zoar, for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither," Genesis 19:22. A wicked nation is often reprieved for the righteous' sake. The tares are spared for the wheat's sake.

11. The death of a righteous man is more excellent. Death comes with a habeas corpus. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?" Psalms 89:48. Grace itself gives no charter of exemption from it. An earthen pot, though full of gold, may break. The righteous, who are earthen vessels, though they are filled with the golden graces, are not freed from breaking by death. But their death is precious. Wicked men, like hawks, are set high upon a perch, decked with jingling bells, but then comes their passing bell and calls them away; and, when they die, there is no missing them. Their life was scarcely worth a prayer, nor their death worth a tear. The wicked die in their sins, John 8:24. Death to them is but a trap door to let them into hell. But when a righteous man dies, his sins die with him. The pale face of death looks ruddy, being sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb. When a believer has death in his body, he has Christ in his soul. The day of his death is his ascension day to heaven. The death of a saint is precious to God; the righteous are said to be gathered. A sinner is carried away in a storm, whereas the righteous are gathered like we gather precious fruit and candy it. So greatly does God value the death of a saint that He makes inquisition for every drop of his blood. His death is precious to the saints who survive him. They

follow his hearse weeping as David did Abner's. Though they know that, when a godly man dies, he is fixed in a higher and more transparent orb, yet they cannot but mourn at the fall of such a star. It is a lamentation when God cuts down the pillars of a land; the great cables and anchors of a ship being gone, there is danger of a shipwreck. It presages a storm coming when God hides His jewels. After Austin's death followed the sacking of Hippo by the Goths and Vandals. After the decease of Paraeus came the destruction of Heidelberg. Hence it is that the saints who are left behind, when they see such as are the glory of a kingdom taken away by a stroke of death, cannot but cry as Elisha did when Elijah was parted from him. "My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and tile horsemen thereof", 2 Kings 2:12. The saints living are affected with the loss of the godly, and carry them to their grave with a shower of tears.

12. The dust of a righteous man is more excellent. When the bodies of the wicked are laid in the grave, there lies a heap of dust to be tumbled into hell. But the dust of a righteous man is part of Christ's mystical Body. The dust of a saint is united to Christ while it is in the grave, and as the dust of believers is now excellent, so it will appear shortly in the sight of men and angels. Emperor Trajan's ashes were honored at Rome, so the ashes of the saints at the resurrection shall be honored when they shall be made like Christ's glorious body in its beauty.. strength, agility, and immortality.

## 03 - What He Has

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From A Plea for the Godly. by Thomas Watson A Plea for the Godly (cont'd)

2. What He Has. A righteous man is more excellent than a wicked in respect of what he has.

1. He has a more excellent name. God Himself embalmed Moses' name and set a garland of honor upon his hearse. Joshua 1:2, "Moses My servant is dead." The names of the righteous are registered in the sacred records of Scripture. Proverbs 10:7, "The memory of the just is blessed." Isaiah 65:15 "The wicked leave their name for a curse." How cursed is the name of Judas! What Christian would baptize his child with that name? How odious are the names of Nero, Domitian, and Bonner! When their bodies rot underground, their names rot above ground. But by faith the righteous obtained a good report. How renowned was Moses for his meekness, Cornelius for his alms? Their names send forth a fragrant perfume in the church of God to this day. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," Psalms 112:6. It may be said of a gracious person as once was said of King David, his name was much esteemed. A wicked man may leave a great estate behind; a righteous man leaves a good name.

2. A righteous man has more excellent company. He has the communion of saints. "I am companion to all them that fear Thee," Psalms 119:6. A good man delights in a companion of his own species. The lamb does not care to be with the wolf. If unawares a godly man comes into the company of the wicked, he fears either pollution or scandal. Therefore, he makes haste to get out as out of an infected house. A righteous man flourishes among the saints. He is joined to Christ's mystical Body. "And being let go, they went to their own company," Acts 4:23. A righteous man has communion with God. "Our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus," 1 John 1:3. A gracious soul has sweet inter-course with heaven; he goes to God by prayer and God comes to him by His Spirit. How happy is that person who has the angels to guard him and God to keep him company!

3. A righteous man has more excellent promises belonging to him. What a sinner has is rather by providence than by virtue of a promise. It is the saints who are called "heirs of the promise;" Hebrews 6:17, and those promises are precious, 2 Peter 1:4. They are the beams of the sun of righteousness, the pleasant streams that run in the paradise of Scripture. "All things work together for good," Romans 8:28, but to whom? "To them that love God." All mercies shall work for their good. They shall be footstools to lift up their hearts higher to heaven, and all afflictions shall work for their good; the rod shall be a divine pencil to draw Christ's image more lively upon their souls.

There is another promise. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," Hebrews 13:5. This promise belongs to the heirs of salvation. God will not leave His people either to their strong corruptions or their weak graces. He will counsel them in their doubts, supply them in their wants, and defend them in their dangers. When they are most assaulted, they shall be most assisted. How can God leave them? They are His spouse. Will a man leave his spouse?

Thus the saints have the royal charter of the promises settled upon them. As these promises are sweet, so they are sure. Men reckon their wealth not always by what ready money they have in their houses but by their bonds and leases. A Christian's estate lies mostly in bonds and bills of God's hand sealed with His oath. What better security can there be?

4. A righteous man has more excellent freedom. "And I will walk at liberty," Psalms 119:45. Another is capable of civil freedom; he may be a Roman born, but he is still enslaved to his lusts. But a righteous person is God's freeman, 1 Corinthians 7:22. His neck is out of the devil's yoke. He is "free from the law of sin," Romans 8:2. He has God's free Spirit, Psalms 51:12, which makes him free and cheerful in his obedience. The will is not compelled but changed. A re-generate person is drawn indeed by the Spirit, hut sweetly, as one is drawn into a garden of spices by the fragrance of their smell. He is drawn to Christ as one is drawn with another's beauty. He is free; a righteous soul chooses the ways of God, Psalms 119:30, and what greater act of freedom is there than an act of choice? And a saint cannot have his spiritual freedom taken from him. While he suffers in prison, his conscience is most free. In short, he is made free to enjoy "the innumerable company of angels," Hebrews 12:22.

5. A righteous man has more excellent food. Carnal men feed only on earthly provision; the righteous feeds on heavenly. He tastes how sweet the Lord is, Psalms 34:8. He feeds on God's love; this is the hidden manna. He eats Christ's flesh, which not only begets life, John 6:33, but prevents death. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die," John 6:50 - that is, not die the second death. Other bread may nauseate or cause bloating, but there is no excess here. We can-not eat too much of the Bread of Life. We cannot have too much of Christ, as one cannot have too much of health. Oh, what excellent food is this! God Himself is in this cheer!

6. A righteous man has more excellent armor, namely, "the armor of light," Romans 13:12. This armor is of God's making, and the Lord, with His armor, gives strength. Alexander the Great might have given a coward armor, but he could not give him courage. But God infuses a spirit of magnanimity into His people. With His armor He conveys strength. "My strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Corinthians 12:9. When a Christian has on God's armor and goes forth in the power of His might. nothing can hurt him. That wicked one touches him not, that is, with a deadly touch. Grace is armor of proof; it may be shot, but it cannot be shot through. This spiritual armor is not burdensome; a Christian may run his race in it as well as fight. The more the armor of God is struck at, the stronger it is; the more faith is assaulted, the more vigorous it is; the more zeal is opposed, the hotter it is. This excellent armor makes a Christian steadfast in religion. Hypocrites wear Christ's colors but lack His armor; therefore, they fall away. The righteous man never gives over the spiritual combat till the trophies are hung up and the palm branches are put in his hand in token of victory.

7. A righteous man has more excellent hopes. A sinner's hope is in this life; he hopes to increase his estate. He makes the wedge of gold his hope, but it is a perishing hope, Proverbs 11:7. But the righteous man's hope excels. His hope is in Christ; it is both a helmet and an anchor. While he is fighting with temptation, hope is a helmet. While he is upon the waters of affliction, hope is an anchor. The anchor of a ship is cast downwards; the anchor of the soul is cast upwards in heaven. A saint's hope is a purifying hope, a death-bed hope, a soul-comforting hope. He is "looking for

that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior," Titus 2:13. When Christ was in the flesh, He appeared as a Surety; now in heaven He appears as an Advocate and, when He comes in the clouds, He will appear as a Judge. A righteous man hopes for this blessed appearing, when Christ shall vindicate His saints from all un-just calumnies and openly acquit them in the court.

8. A righteous man has more excellent joys. Religion does not restrain but refines his joy. What is the joy of a sinner? He takes joy in corn and wine; he sucks from the flower of pleasure. Alas! What is this to the joy of the righteous? We joy in God. This joy arises from the pardon of sin, the firstfruits of the Spirit, and the foretaste of glory. The gleanings of this heavenly joy are better than the vintage of carnal joy. Plato told the musicians that philosophers could dine and sup without them. How much more can a believer be merry in the Lord without the supplement of worldly comforts!

It is more inward joy. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart," Psalms 4:7. Other joy lies more in the surface; it pleases the senses. It is like the paradise the Turks dream of where they shall have all dainty dishes served with gold in abundance, silken and purple apparel, and angels their servants bringing them red wine in silver cups. This delights the fancy and the senses, but divine joy cheers the conscience. Acolampadius, on his sick bed, when asked if he wanted any light, put his hand to his heart and said, "Here I have light enough." The saints' joy, being inward, sweetens affliction. It turns their water into wine. "Having received the Word in much affliction with joy" 1 Thessalonians 1:6. Theodoret, when he was on the rack, in the midst of his torments said that he found no anguish. When they took him down from the rack, he complained they did him wrong in so doing. "For," said he, "all the while I was on the rack, I thought there was one in white, an angel who stood by and wiped off the sweat, and I found much sweetness which now I have lost."

It is a more unmixed joy. Worldly joy is usually spiced with some bitterness; guilt eclipses it. "In laughter the heart is sorrowful," Proverbs 14:13. One may drink wormwood in a golden cup. but the joy of the righteous, like David's harp, drives away sadness. It gives honey without gall; it has no alloy or umbrage. The joy of the righteous is more durable. Other joy is like a flower that withers while you are smelling it. I have read of a river in America that runs in the day with a full torrent but is dry at night. The comforts of the world run strongly in the day of health and prosperity, but at the night of death they are dried up. But as joy abounds in the godly, so it abides. "Your joy no man taketh from you," John 16:22. Divine joy is but begun in this life; it is perfected in glory'. Here is but the tuning of the instrument; the sweet concert is reserved for heaven. Here the saints do but sup of the cup; there they shall drink of the rivers of pleasure forevermore.

3. What He Shall Have. A righteous man is more excellent than a wicked in respect of what he shall have. He shall have a better reward. Both righteous and wicked are re-warded, but there is a vast difference. The wicked shall have a reward of punishment, the righteous of mercy. So that a man shall say, verily there is a reward for the righteous," Psalm 58:11. They shall be rewarded with a kingdom. The height of men's ambition is a kingdom. Earthly kingdoms are corruptible. What has become of the pride of Babylon, the glory of Athens, the pomp of Troy? They lie buried in their own ruins But the kingdom of heaven can-not be shaken, Hebrews 12:28; it runs parallel with eternity. In that blessed kingdom, we shall have a transforming sight of God, we shall be like Him, 1 John 3:2, like a pearl, by the beams of the sun, becomes bright and radiant like the sun.

God's terror shall be then laid aside. The majesty in God shall appear, but majesty shining with beauty and sweetened with love. This will be unspeakable and full of glory. And this reward is near at hand. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," Romans 13:11. When Columbus's men were weary of their voyage, he desired them to go on but three days longer. They did so and discovered America. While the righteous fall upon the waters of affliction, this may comfort them in their voyage; by going a little further they will see heaven. There the tree of life grows and the crystal streams flow from Lebanon. The saints' salvation is now nearer than on the birthday of their faith. Thus I have beaten out this gold in the text into the leaf, and shown you wherein "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," Proverbs 12:26.

II. The second thing is why a righteous man is more excellent than another. The reason is in respect of that near relation he stands in to Christ. There is consanguinity; He is brother to Christ. Christ partakes of his flesh and he partakes of Christ's Spirit. There is unity: A righteous man is one with Christ as the members are one with the head. Then, surely, the righteous must have a surpassing dignity. If Christ is a precious corner stone, 1 Peter 2:6, then also those lively stones must be precious which are built upon Him.

USE 1. See from hence what it is that raises the price of a person. It is righteousness; this puts a glory and excellency upon him. He that is graceless is worthless. "The heart of the wicked is little worth," Proverbs 10:20. But righteousness makes the heart like the heaven bespangled with stars. The graces are compared to chains of gold for their value, and to myrrh and cassia for their fragrantcy. As the precious stones shone upon Aaron's breastplate, so righteousness shines in the eyes of God and angels. What made Christ admire the woman of Canaan but her graces? "Great is thy faith," Matthew 15:28. Christ was more taken with that than all the fancy buildings of the Temple. God does not esteem the better of any man because he is rich or noble or embellished with worldly ornaments. It is righteousness that advances him. Righteousness is to the soul as the diamond to the ring, as light to the world which bespangles and adorns it

USE 2. Learn then, that it is no disparagement to any person to be righteous seeing it casts a splendor and renown on him and makes him more excellent than others. Some are loathe to espouse religion because they think it will be a stain to their reputation; but you see how righteousness emblazons one's nameplate and gives him a super-eminence above others. Novarinus relates of an ancient king who invited a company of poor Christians and set them above some of his nobles. Being asked why he showed so much respect to men of such mean birth and extract, he replied, "I must honor these as the children of the high God; they will be kings and princes with me in another world." Theodosius thought it a greater renown to be a member of Christ than the head of an empire. The righteous are highly in favor with God and He has enrolled their names in the Book of Life. It was a custom among the Romans to write down the names of their senators in a book; therefore, they were called Patres Conscripti. This is the honor of the righteous - their names are written among the courtiers of heaven. Believers, in regard of their mystical union with Christ, have a kind of excellence above the angels. The angels are morning stars, Job 38:7, but these are clothed with the sun. Can it be any shame to be listed among the saints when God is not ashamed to be called their God? Hebrews 11:16.

USE 3. See what high thoughts God has of the righteous, He looks upon them as more excellent than others, and His judgment is best worth praising. The saints have low thoughts of themselves;

they overlook their own worth, like Moses who knew not that his face shined. The eye, though beautiful, does not see itself. Yet, as low thoughts as the righteous have of themselves, God has high thoughts of them. "Since Thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable," Isaiah 43:4. The Lord puts way the wicked like dross. The greatest man in the world, lacking holiness, is like Naaman, who was captain of the king's host and a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper, 2 Kings 5:1. A wicked man may be higher than others in nobility and worldly grandeur. A dunghill is higher than other ground, but it is never the better; it sends forth odious vapors.

## 04 - God's Titles for the Righteous

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From A Plea for the Godly. by Thomas Watson A Plea for the Godly (cont'd) GOD'S TITLES FOR THE RIGHTEOUS But God sets a high estimate upon the righteous, and that appears by bestowing more excellent titles on them than upon others.

1. God calls them His jewels. He laid His best jewel to pawn for them. They are jewels for their sparkling quality. They shine in God's eye. The saints have a kind of angelic brightness, as one of the ancients expresses it.

They are jewels for their price. Diamonds, said Pliny, were not known a long time but among kings and emperors. The price of a saint is above others, "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that perverteth his ways, though he be rich", Proverbs 28:6.

2. God calls the righteous "hidden ones," Psalms 83:3. They are hidden, first, for their invisibility. Their excellence is not known to many. The world can see their infirmity, not their eminence. A saint has that eternal glory which cannot be beheld by a carnal eye; the fair face is hid under a veil. Second, righteous are hidden for their safety. Diamonds are hid in the rock, so the saint's life is hid in Christ, the Rock of Ages, Colossians 9:5.

3. God calls the righteous "the excellent of the earth," Psalms 16:2, or "the magnificent," as Junius renders it. They are the spiritual phoenixes; they are the cream and flower of the creation; they are the purer part of the world, doubly refined, Zechariah 13:9.

4. God calls them "vessels of honor," 2 Timothy 2:21. Though they are earthen vessels, yet they have heavenly treasure in them. They are filled with the wine of the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18. Though they are scourged with affliction, yet it is to make them brighter, Daniel 12:10.

5. God calls them the apple of His eye Zechariah 2:8. The apple of the eye is the tenderest part of the eye, to express God's tenderness of them, said Salvia God cannot endure to have His eyeball touched.

6. God calls them "His portion," Deuteronomy 32:9. As if riches lay in them. As a man seals a bag of money for his use, so the Lord seals His people as His portion with a double seal, one of election, 2 Timothy 2:19, the other of assurance, Ephesians 1:13.

7. God calls them His "plant of renown." Ezekiel 34:19. He hedges in this noble plant with His protection, waters it with the silver drops of His ordinances, blesses the springing of it, adorns it with fruit, and transplants it into the heavenly paradise where it grows continually in the sweet sunshine of His favor.

8. God calls them "joint heirs with Christ," Romans 8:17. Jesus Christ is a rich heir. He is Lord of all. and the saints have shares with Christ.

9. God calls them the luminaries of the world. They give light by their precepts and example. "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world," Php 2:15, Lot was a bright star in Sodom. The

world would be dark were it not for the children of light.

10. God calls them a "peculiar people," 1 Peter 2:9. He has taken them out of the world as out of the wild forest, and enclosed them to Himself by a decree. They are a purchased people. The righteous are the purchase of Christ's blood, and He will not lose His purchase.

11. God calls them a kingdom of priests. They are kings. They have their throne, Revelation 3:21, and white robes, Revelation 6:11, Robes signify their dignity and white their sanctity.

They are priests. The priesthood under the law was honorable. The king's daughter was wife to Jehoiada the priest, 2 Chronicles 22:11. In ancient times, the Egyptians chose their kings out of their priests. The saints are consecrated to be priests. to offer up to God eucharistical sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in heaven.

God calls them a crown of glory and a diadem in His hand, Isaiah 62:3 That is, said a learned writer, they are exceedingly eminent and renowned above other people. The crown is a sign of the highest state and honor Nay, the Lord calls them expressly His glory. "Israel My glory." Isaiah 46:13, as if His glory lay in His people All this shows what a high estimate God puts upon the righteous in giving them such illustrious titles of honor. They are princes in all lands; kings minister to them, even angels. The Lord will give whole kingdoms to ransom them, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom," Isaiah 43:3. That was when God destroyed Egypt in the Red Sea for the saving of Israel. Nay, God gave His own Son to die for their ransom. And if God esteems so highly His people now on earth, how much more will He value them when they are in heaven? If when the righteous are afflicted they are so excellent, how much more when they are crowned? If with their blemishes they are precious, then how much more when their imperfections shall be done away and they shall be presented to the Father without spot and wrinkle? If gold is valuable in the wedge and the ore, then how precious is it when it is fully refined? If wheat is excellent when it is mingled with chaff, then how much worth has it when it is fanned and made pure? If God reposes the righteous more excellent than others when conflicting with infirmities, then how incomparably excellent and glorious will they appear in His eye when they shall be cleansed from all remaining corruption, and shall shine with knowledge as the air with light? If a man makes any account of his friend when he sees him under distempers of body which cause forwardness, how much more will he prize him when he sees him in perfect health and his spirit calm and sedate? If God esteems the righteous better than others in the present juncture of time, when they have their unto-ward passions and fainting-fits of unbelief, what will He do when they shall be perfectly holy and as angels of God?

USE 4. See the different esteem that God has of the righteous and that men have of them. The men of the world esteem the saints lightly; they disdain them and scarcely allow them half an eye. They think, of all things, the people of God may be best 'pared; they look upon them as the burden and refuse of the earth. "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day," 1 Corinthians 4:13. The apostles were the eyes of the world, the breasts of the church, and earthly angels; yet they were counted by some like the dung cart that goes through the city into which everyone throws his filth. The saints are loaded with invectives and are not judged worthy to live in the world. "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live," Acts 22:22. But God has an entirely different way of evaluating the righteous. He thinks the world is not worth", of them. "Of whom the world was not worthy, Hebrews 11:38. Hence it is that He takes his children so fast away by death and places them among the cherubims. God

looks upon the righteous as His curious needle-work, wrought with the finger of the Holy Ghost and the glory of the creation. He would soon break up house in the world were it not for their sakes. This excellent esteem God has of them will be best seen when He shall separate between the precious and the vile and shall say to the wicked, "Go ye cursed," and to the godly, "Come ye blessed."

USE 5. See how dearly God loves the righteous and how near to His heart they lie. They are more excellent. The word "excellent" carries affection in it. Things we prize we love. The righteous are God's treasure, Psalms 135:4, and where His treasure is there is His heart. They are God's delicious garden where He plants the flower of His love, They are the dearly beloved of His soul. They are His darling. He engraves them upon the palms of His hands that they may be never out of His eye. He rejoices over them with joy and rests in His love. It is no ordinary affection that God bears to the righteous. The sun shining upon a burning glass sets on fire only the object that is near the glass. The beams of God's love are more intensely enflamed towards them who are near Him by grace; these have the strength and spirits of His love distilled, He loves them as He loves Christ. Indeed, in one sense, God's love to Christ and believers is not alike, for Christ is loved purely for His own sake but believers are loved for Christ's sake. Yet, in another sense, God the Father loves believers as He loves Christ. It is the same love for the quality, the same for the unchangeableness of it. God will no more cease to love believers than He will to love Christ.

USE 6. See from hence what a venerable opinion we should have of the righteous. They are to be prized by us above others. "He honoreth them that fear the Lord," Psalms 15:4. A saint in rags is better than a sinner in scarlet. We prize things that have excellency in them. Why do we value gold and pearl but because they excel glass beads? Oh, then, esteem the righteous as most worthy because of intrinsic holiness whereby they outshine their neighbors! The righteous carry Christ about them. "Christ liveth in me," Galatians 2:20. Queen Cleopatra put a jewel in her cup which contained the price of a kingdom. How rich are they who carry Christ, the Pearl of price, with them! Despise not the saints for their worldly poverty, but honor them for their virtue. We esteem a ruby or diamond though it is in the dust. John Baptist wore but a leather girdle, yet he was more than a prophet. He was honored to usher in the King of Glory into the world. John was so eminent a person that Herod would have kept his oath, though he had not beheaded him, for he swore to the damsel to give her what she asked up to half of the kingdom. But John Baptist was worth more than all his kingdom. A saint's exterior may be poor but he has a rich lining. The outside of the Tabernacle was goat's hair, but within it was embellished with gold. "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalms 45:13. Jesus Christ Himself was outwardly mean, yet in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom. A soul inspired by the Almighty and beautified with grace exceeds others more than the light of the sun exceeds the light of a candle.

USE 7, If the righteous are more excellent than others, then how severe will God be against those who wrong them? The wicked are thorns in the sides of the godly. Saint Paul was scourged by cruel hands. "Thrice was I beaten with rods," 2 Corinthians 11:25, as if you should see a slave whip the king's son; but shall not God avenge His elect? Surely He will. "The sword of the Lord is filled with blood... for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion," Isaiah 34:6-8. It is as if the prophet had said, "The time appointed has now come for God to avenge Zion for the wrongs done to her." Jeremiah 50:10-11 says, "Chaldea shall be a spoil, saith the Lord, because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of Mine

heritage." And Jeremiah 30:16, "All that prey upon thee, will I give for a prey. The saints are persons of honor; they are God's first-born. Oh, how enraged will the Lord be against such as offer injury to them! They trample God's pearls in the dust. They strike at the apple of His eye. The righteous are God's diadem. Will a king endure to have His robes spit upon and his crown thrown in the dirt? What is done to the righteous is done to God Himself. When the king's favorite is struck at, the king himself is struck at. "I know thy rage against me," 2 Kings 19:27. The rage of Sennacherib was against the person of Hezekiah, but, there being a league between God and His people, the Lord took it as done to Himself. "I know Thy rage against me: certainly it shall not go unpunished. He reproveth kings for their sakes. What became of (the pagan Emperors) Julian, Nero, and Diocletian? One of them had his death wound from heaven. Others had their bowels come out and died raving. Charles the ninth of France, who had glutted himself with the blood of so many Christians in the massacre at Paris, was in such inward horror that he never dared be waked without music, and at length blood issued out at so many parts of his body that he died bleeding. These were set up as public monuments of God's vengeance.

## 05 - Marks of the Righteous

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From A Plea for the Godly. by Thomas Watson A Plea for the Godly (cont'd) THE MARKS OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN Let us try whether we are in the number of these righteous ones; whether we are indeed more excel-lent than others.

1. A righteous man is a humble man. He who is proud of his righteousness is unrighteous. "God I thank Thee that I am not as other men are. . . . I fast. . . . I give tithes. . ." Luke 18:11-12. Here was a triple crown of pride the Pharisee wore. Righteousness, though it raises the name, depresses the heart. "If I am righteous, I will not lift up my head," Job 10:15. The violet is a sweet flower, yet hangs down the head; such a flower was Job. The righteous are like the silkworm. While she weaves her curious works, she hides her-self in the silk. The righteous man is more likely to judge himself than to play the critic on another. He shrinks into nothing in his own thoughts. David cried out, "I am a worm and no man"; though a saint, though a king, yet a worm.

St. Austin said, "Lord, I am not worthy of Thy love." Bishop Hooper said, "Lord I am hell, but Thou art heaven " One of the martyrs subscribed his letter, "The most hard-hearted sinner, John Brad-ford." He who is righteous puts a greater value upon others than upon himself. "Let each esteem other better than themselves," Php 2:3. The higher grace is, the lower the heart is. The more gold you put into the scale, the lower it descends. The richer the ship is laden, the lower it sails- When the soul looks black in its own eye, it is most comely. "I dwell with him also that is of an humble spirit," Isaiah 57:15. God has two heavens, and the humble heart is one of them.

2. A righteous man is devoted to holiness. The priests under the law were not only washed in the great laver but also adorned with glorious apparel, Exodus 28:2, the emblem of a righteous man who is not only washed from gross sin, but adorned with inward sanctity. He is what he seems. He does not have holiness painted on him but living in him. It is said of Zachariah and Elizabeth that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Luke 1:6. A good Christian is God's temple. His body is the outward court of the temple and his soul the holy of holies. He is pure in heart, Matthew 5:8. His work is to serve God and his end is to enjoy Him. Man, having a principle of reason, must not live as a beast, and, having a principle of righteousness, he must not live as a sinner. He is not metamorphosed; "he lives godly," Titus 2:12. Christ is not only his Priest, but his Pattern. As he makes use of Christ's death for his salvation, so of Christ's life for his imitation.

3. A righteous man is just in his dealings. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands," Psalms 24:3-4. He who is righteous has not only his heart purged from unholiness but his hands from injustice. He abhors all indirect ways; he will not defraud to grow rich. He will not sell his conscience for a wedge of gold. A good Christian is zealous for duties of both tables; he makes piety and justice kiss each other.

4. A Righteous man serves God out of a principle of love. Grace now biases the heart and carries it strongly towards God in ardent affection. A righteous man S serving God is not by constraint but

consent. It is heaven to him to serve God! He mounts up in the fiery chariot of love and breathes forth his soul into his Savior's bosom. Love is the shibboleth that differentiates a righteous man from others. The carnal man says, "What a weariness is it to serve the Lord!" Malachi 1:13. The righteous man says, "What a pleasure is it!" "I delight in the law of God in the inner man," Romans 7:22. As the bee delights to suck the flower, so a holy person delights to obey God. He does duty out of love to duty; he prays out of love to prayer. When he sings, he makes melody in his heart to the Lord. Love lines the yoke of religion and makes it easy. As a bride delights in putting on her jewels, as a musician delights in playing on his violin, so a gracious soul delights in obeying God. Love to duty is better than duty; serving God with delight is angelic. The seraphims are described as having wings, Isaiah 6:2, to show their cheerfulness as well as their ability in God's service.

5. A righteous man perseveres in religion. He who gives over his work before he has finished it is but half a workman; and he that gives over in religion before he has finished his faith is but half a Christian. The promise is to him who overcomes. Who makes reckoning of corn that sheds before harvest? It was the glory of the church of Thyatira that her last works were more than her first. Perseverance carries away the garland. A true Christian not only sets out in the race but holds out. "The righteous also shall hold on his way," Job 17:9, be that way what it will. Though strewn with thorns, though there is a lion in the way, he is resolved to hold on his way "Bonds and afflictions abide me, but none of these things move me," Acts 20:23-24 The troubles a godly man meets with for conscience enflame his zeal all the more. Sufferings cannot make Christ stop loving the saints, nor make the saints stop loving Christ. Though Job lost all, he held fast his integrity. Unsound hearts, when they see the swords and staves are up, leave Christ and shift for themselves. A right-spirited saint is made of mettle that will not wear out. Athanasius (the Church Father) was the glory of his age; he had a counter motion to the times; he kept his piety when the world turned Arian. Melancthon, who was called the phoenix of Germany, was, as Ambrose said, like the cypress tree that keeps its greenness in the winter season. The church of Pergamus held fast to Christ's name though she dwelt where Satan's seat was. This is to be righteous: to be faithful to the death and not suffer the breastplate of holiness to be shot through. My foot has held His steps; His way have I kept and not declined. And whoever is thus divinely qualified is entitled to the privilege in the text. He is more excellent than others.

USE 8. If the righteous are thus excellent, let it encourage us all to true piety. No sooner do we become gracious than we become precious. This day have "I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you," Joshua 5:9. That day we become righteous, our reproach is rolled away from us. Faith raises our fame; righteousness exchanges our fetters for a crown. A crown of glory shall she deliver to you. By espousing godliness, we are better and richer than others, being possessed of a gold mine - the un-searchable riches of Christ! We have from Christ the riches of justification, consolation, and glorification. We are as rich as the angels. Oh, then, let this excite every one to be godly! Righteousness puts a splendid excellence upon a man, as if you should see a clod of dust turned into a star.

1. If the righteous are so excellent in God's eye, then let God be excellent in their eye. If they are high in God's thoughts, let God be high in theirs. Let the saints have adoring thoughts of God. "Thy righteousness, O God, is very high. Thou whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth," Psalms 83:18. God is the most super-eminent blessing; who can show forth all His praise? God surpasses the praises of the archangels. He is encircled with glory and majesty. He infinitely

outvies all the powers of the earth. Princes hold their crowns by immediate tenure from Him; His dominions are largest, His possession longest. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," Psalms 45:6. Those excellencies which lie scattered in the creature are infinitely united in God. Austin complains that man can admire the magnitude of the stars and not admire Him who is the Father of lights. Oh, esteem God most excellent!

God's wisdom is excellent. He is wise in heart. He knows the causes of things; yea, at one instant. Angels light their lamps at this sun.

God's power is excellent. He is Almighty. His power is as large as His will. What His soul desires, even that He does. He bridles the proud waves. He cuts off the spirit of princes. God's holiness is excellent. This is the most sparkling jewel of His crown. "Glorious in holiness." Exodus 15:11. God is first transcendently holy: "There is none holy as the Lord," 1 Samuel 2:2. The blessed seraphims cover their faces and cry "Holy, holy, holy", but what angels can take the just dimensions of His sanctity? They are too low in stature to measure these pyramids.

God is communicatively holy: "I am the Lord which sanctify you," Leviticus 20:8. He is not only a pattern of holiness but a fountain. He empties His golden oil through the pipes of the sanctuary. His holiness is imparted, not impaired.

God is unchangeably holy. His holiness can no more cease than His godhead. He never lost a drop of His holiness. As He cannot have more holiness, because He is perfectly holy, so He cannot have less holiness, because He is unchangeably holy.

God's love is excellent. "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God!" Psalms 36:7. This drops as the honeycomb; it dulcifies and sweetens the waters of Marah; it is better than life; it has a hyper-hyperbole in it. "It passes knowledge," Ephesians 3:19. God's love may be felt but not fathomed. Oh, then, let the saints have God-admiring thoughts! The psalmist esteemed Him above the glory of heaven and the comforts of the earth, Psalms 73:25. God is the marrow and quintessence of all good. His beauty is amazing; His love is ravishing. All divine perfections meet in God as the lines in the center. Let us, then, with Paul, count all things loss for Him. If God puts such a value and appreciation upon the righteous, that they are highest in His esteem, let Him be highest in theirs.

2. If God has so honored the righteous and made them better than others, let not the righteous debase themselves or lose any of their excellency. Has God made them precious? Let not them make themselves vile.

(1) Let them not debase themselves with earth. An earthly saint is as great a contradiction as an orthodox heretic. It is called filthy lucre because it makes a person so filthy. Earthliness is an enemy to grace. It is Aristotle's observation that dogs can-not hunt among sweet flowers because the smell of the flowers diverts the scent of the hare. Those can scarcely run after Christ in the savor of His ointments who are diverted by the smell of earthly de-lights. Whom the Helena of the world kisses, she be-trays. It is below a Christian - and too much resembles Satan - to be always compassing the earth. 'And seekest thou great things for thyself' Jeremiah 45:5. As if God had asked Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, 'Baruch, who are by your new birth excellent, akin to angels; by your office excellent; a Levite; do you now seek earthly things? I am going to pluck up, and are you planting? The ship is sinking, and are you decorating your cabin? Oh, Baruch, do not so

degrade yourself of your honor! Do you seek great things? Seek them not." Though the wicked, like eels, wrap themselves in the mud, yet let the birds of paradise fly aloft. The higher grace is, the less earthly-minded should Christians be; the higher the sun is, the shorter the shadow.

(2) Let not the righteous debase themselves by sinful compliance. Such as profess themselves to be regenerate should not be malleable to every opinion and humor. Shall the excellent cedar bend like the pliant willow? "Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens," Genesis 49:14. Issachar was a strong tribe but lacked courage. You who are righteous, be not too pliant. Do not choose iniquity rather than affliction, Job 36:21. Do not so value your liberty as to wound your integrity. God is a great God; dare not to offend Him. He is a good God; venture not to lose Him. Be not swayed by the evil examples of others. Dead fish only swim downstream. The righteous greatly lessen both their esteem and re-ward by fraternizing with sinners. Let not the godly violate their conscience. The dust will be wiped off this glass and then it will represent guilt. When Crankier had, with some reticence of mind, sub-scribed to the popish articles, lie was afterwards in great horror; his conscience was like Moses' rod turned into a serpent. He could have no peace till he had recanted his subscription. By sordid, unworthy actions, the Holy Spirit will be grieved, the godly will be offended, the wicked will insult, and conscience will accuse. Conscience is like a bee: If a man does well, it gives honey; if ill, it puts forth a sting.

(3) If the righteous are more excellent than others, let not them envy the prosperity of the wicked. "Let not thy heart envy sinners," Proverbs 23:17. God has made you better than they. He has given you His Spirit to sanctify you and His Son to save you. Envy is an ill humor. It hurts a man's self most. Envy drinks its own venom; it corrodes the body as canker does iron. The first man born in the world was envious. Ibeodoret observes that it was not so much Cain's own sin that troubled him as to see his brother's offering accepted. It is unbecoming for God's people to feed this fretting disease; it is bad to feed an envy. What if God wrings out the water of a full cup to the wicked? It is but a sugared poison. Prosperity, Like Circe (the mythological witch), with its enchantments turns men into swine; it makes them grow worse. The moon never suffers an eclipse but when it is at the full. The world is given to the wicked in anger. When Belshazzar was in the midst of his jollity, the hand of God was writing bitter things against him. The hot day of prosperity presages thunder at night. Haman's banquet was but a preface to the hangman's noose. Oh, Christian, shake off envy as Paul did the viper! God has made more excellent than others, He has given you better riches and preferment. They have a golden apple, you have a crown, 2 Timothy 4:8. God keeps the best wine till last. Let this divine harp drive away the evil spirit of envy and discontent.

(4) If the righteous are so excellent, let it persuade people to get into their company and choose to be of their acquaintance. Next to being good, it is wisdom to converse with those who are so. "The excellent in whom is all My delight," Psalms 16:3. Be not like swine, who would rather lie in the dung than in a fair meadow. The righteous are the light of the world, and it is prudence to follow them who carry the light. Seek for the olive; but if the bramble takes hold of you, cast it away. There is much good to be gotten in the society of the godly. Their speeches edify. their prayers quicken) their examples teach. Graft among the saints. A slip grafted into a good stock partakes of the virtue and influence of the root. The righteous are more excellent. Be often among these spices and you will smell them. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise," Proverbs 13:20.

(5) It exhorts the righteous to walk worthy of the high honor which God has raised them to. "Walk as children of light," Ephesians 5:8. As you are more excellent by your high calling, so be more excellent in your walking. Adorn religion by your prudent holy carriage "Shine as lights in the world," Php 2:15. Some Antinomians of old taught that whatever a man's life was, yet he was justified. So they believed the false gospel which Luther confuted. Such as are a royal priesthood should be a peculiar people. The Lord has dignified the righteous above the rest of the world, and they must not take the same latitude others do. For example, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink," Proverbs 31:4. It is becoming not them who are high-born to be in-temperate. So it is not for you who are of a sacred pedigree - whom God has made superior to others -to be vain and loose in your behavior. Alexander would have the Grecians known not only by their garments but also by their virtues. A child of God should be known by the exemplary nature of his life. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Peter 1:15. Christ has anointed His people with the graces as those virgins were purified with sweet odors, Esther 2:12, and He expects that they should send abroad a sweet perfume of holiness. Christians must observe that which is lovely and of good report, Php 4:8. They need to walk accurately, Ephesians 5:15, because so many watch for their halting. If the wicked find anything the people of God dishonorable to their profession, they lay the blame upon religion. It is noted by the fifth-century Christian writer, "What will the pagans say when they see Christians loose and 'The Christians live so bad because Christ taught them no better.' How should the righteous off occasion from those who seek occasion? 2 Corinthians 11:12. Daniel's piety sealed up the lips of his enemies, Daniel 6:4. Martin Bucer was so unblamable in his life that those who most maligned had nothing justly to lay to his charge.

Oh, Christians, look to your steps! When you've prayed against sin, then watch against temptation, A spot in a royal robe cannot be hid; a dash of ink would quickly have been spied in Aaron's white If there is a blemish in a professor, everyone's eye is upon it. The sin of such a person causes rig among the saints, as the patriarchs could not help but be ashamed when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Oh, that all who profess the name would depart from iniquity, 2 Timothy 2:19! Dare not blaspheme that worthy name by which you called, James 2:7! Such as are more excellent others, God expects some singular thing from them. They should bring more glory to God and, by exemplary piety, make proselytes to religion. Better fruit is expected from a vineyard than from a wild forest.

(6) Has God so enabled the righteous and given them a super-excellency above other? Then let the righteous be thankful. "He raiseth the poor Out of the dust, that He may set him with princes," Psalms 113:7-8.

God has raised you out of the low estate wherein you were by nature, and has made you more illustrious than others that He may set you with angels, those princes above. "O let the high praises of God be in your mouth," Psalms 149:6. God has done more for believers than for all the world besides. He has given them the "holy anointing", the "new name", the "white stone", which is "the earnest of the inheritance." At the day of judgment, Jesus Christ will confess their names before His Father and the holy angels, Revelation 3:5. And their souls and bodies, being re-united, shall be fully invested with glory. After their session at Christ's right hand, it shall be proclaimed, "Thus shall it be done to the persons whom the King of heaven will honor." Does not all this deserve thankfulness? "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," Psalms 100:1. In the Hebrew it is ' "Sound for

His praise as with a trumpet," Praise God with the best instrument, the heart, and let it be screwed up to the highest peg. Do it with the whole heart. You who are righteous, speak well of God and tell others what He has done for you. His blessings bestowed are legacies, not debts. Praise is glorifying God, Psalms 50:23, and will not you cheerfully pay this debt? Will you not do it constantly? "I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being," Psalms 146:2. The people of Carthage at first used to send a tenth of their yearly revenue to Hercules, but by degrees they grew weary and stopped sending. Christians fail much in their thank-offering. Do not be like those who play a fit or two of music in a year and then the violin must be hung up. Be often upon Mount Gerizim blessing God. Consider that thankfulness is the work of heaven; you who shall have angels' reward, do an-gels' work. Sound forth the memorial of God's holiness and celebrate His fame. Praise is the music of heaven; do not let God lack His music. While others murmur, you bless. Wait and long for that time when you shall be called up to the heavenly mount and placed among the glorious cherubims, where your employment to all eternity will be to breathe forth love and sound forth praise.

USE 9. Of consolation to the righteous who are under dejection of spirit. God esteems them more excellent than others. It is comfort:

1. When they are humbled by sin. They have mean thoughts of themselves, and see so much corruption that they think they have no grace. Aye, but here is comfort; God sees an excellency in them though they can see none in themselves. He can distinguish between the grace in them and the infirmity; and He judges them not by their worst part but by their best. God prizes His people, notwithstanding their failings. A man values his corn though it is mingled with chaff.

2. When the righteous are humbled by affliction. "He hath covered me with ashes," Lamentations 3:16. My outward comforts are, as it were, in the grave and have ashes thrown upon them. The godly are apt to mistake and think God does not care for them because He afflicts them. "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" Judges 6:13. But let not the righteous be troubled or cast away their anchor. Still God makes great account of them and, though they are more afflicted than others, yet they are more excellent. God esteemed highly of Hezekiah on his sickbed. He heard his prayer and bottled his tears, Isaiah 38:5. Job, when full of biles and sores, was dear to God. Job on the dunghill was more excellent than Pharaoh on the throne. God boasted of Job to Satan, "There is none like him in the earth," Job 2:3. A goldsmith esteems his gold though it is in the furnace. God sees an excellence in the saints when they are bleeding under their sufferings. A piece of porcelain is of great value though it is battered. Grapes are precious though they are in the winepress. Jesus Christ was on the cross, yet He had been proclaimed to be God's beloved Son by a voice from heaven, Matthew 3:1".

3. It is comfort when the righteous are humbled by desertion. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me," Job 6:4. The Hebrew word for arrow comes from a root that signifies "to cut", to show that the poisoned arrow of desertion cuts to the heart. The Psalmist cries out, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me," Psalms 88:7; which is to say, "Like a mountain of lead, it even sinks my spirits." In this forlorn state, the saints think God esteems them vile and has cast them off. "Lord, why castest Thou off my soul?" Psalms 88:14. God holds His deserted ones, as it were, over the fire of hell, and they think they are ready to drop in. But, Christian, you may be sorely deserted, yet God may judge you excellent! Zion thought she was quite forsaken. Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me,"

Isaiah 49:14. But, at that time, God had a dear respect for her. "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands," Isaiah 49:16. God may have the face of an enemy yet the heart of a father. The Lord deserts His people for their profit, Hebrews 12:10. While He is humbling them, He is healing them. He seems to put them away from Him, but it is to draw them nearer to Him. He would exercise their faith and prayers the more. God is all this while preparing the saints for the sweet embraces of His love. Desertion is like a purging medicine. The Lord will purge out some ill humour of sin and, after-wards, will manifest His love to His children. The cordial is kept till the working of the medicine is over.

CONCLUSION. Thus, good reader, I have, with all convenient brevity, endeavored to vindicate the true saint and take him out of the fog. I have set be-fore your eyes a child of light. "Mark the perfect man," Psalms 37:37, and imitate him. If, notwithstanding all this surpassing excellency of the righteous, any shall be so wicked as to persist in unrighteousness, they love death. If they shall glory in their unrighteousness, it is as if beggars should boast of their sores; if they shall disparage holiness, it is like a blind man reproaching the sun. Let the righteous bind reproaches as a crown about their head and be no more troubled than they would be to have mad men laugh at them. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," Psalms 37:7. The time is shortly coming when God will clear the innocence of His servants after He has wiped away all tears from their eyes. He will wipe off reproach from their name and, then, this text shall he universally subscribed to, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbors"

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